



## Outcome of the 61st Meeting of the Heads of Delegation (HOD 61-2021)

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## Outcome of the 61st Meeting of the Heads of Delegation (HOD 61-2021)

### Introduction

- 0.1 The 61st Meeting of the Heads of Delegation (HOD 61-2021) was held online on 8-9 December 2021.
- 0.2 The Meeting was attended by participants from all Contracting Parties, by Observers from the Baltic Farmers' Forum on Environment (BFFE), the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) and Cruise Lines International Association Europe (CLIA Europe). The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1** to this Outcome.
- 0.3 The Meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Helsinki Commission, Ms. Lilian Busse, Germany.

### Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

- 1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in document 1-1.

### Agenda Item 2 Outcome of and follow-up to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021

- 2.1 The Meeting recalled that the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021 held on 20 October 2021 adopted the 2021 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and a number of documents along with the BSAP as well as the Ministerial Statement
- 2.2 The Meeting thanked Germany for excellent hosting of the Meeting both in-person and virtually.
- 2.3 The Meeting discussed the implementation of the BSAP and guidance for the Working Groups to plan their future work (document 2-1).
- 2.4 The Meeting highlighted the importance of the urgent implementation of the BSAP, pointing out, however, that conducting the HOLAS 3 assessment should be the priority for the groups involved in this work until 2023.
- 2.5 The Meeting took note of a proposal that Nefco could be invited to a future HOD meeting to discuss the role of the BSAP fund in the implementation of the BSAP.
- 2.6 The Meeting took note of the clarification by the Secretariat that while it has been proposed in document 2-1 to find a "lead" for the implementation of the joint actions, this does not necessarily indicate a lead country, but the implementation of the actions can also be led by e.g. expert group, project or the Secretariat.
- 2.7 The Meeting recalled that the second Meeting of Chairpersons of HELCOM and HELCOM main groups, namely Gear, Maritime, Pressure, State and Conservation, Response, Agri, Fish and HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, will be held online on 25 January 2022. The meeting will be held in order to enhance the flow of information and improve coordination between HELCOM main groups, especially concerning the implementation of the 2021 BSAP and to deliberate on a potential renewal of the HELCOM working structure.
- 2.8 The Meeting agreed to continue the discussion on the guidance at HELCOM 43-2022 and add the implementation of the BSAP to the agenda of that meeting. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to prepare a technical document for HELCOM 43-2022 on the guidance for the implementation of the BSAP clarifying the role of the leads and also taking into account the considerations at the Meeting of the Chairpersons. The Meeting acknowledged that planning of the implementation of the actions has already started in some of the main groups and should continue in the meetings to be held prior to HELCOM 43-2022 to ensure that the implementation of the actions is not delayed.

2.9 The Meeting discussed the timing of the next HELCOM Ministerial Meeting (document 2-2) and agreed on a preliminary timing of future Ministerial Meetings and alignment of relevant processes, as follows;

- Early 2024, under the chairmanship of Latvia, with a focus on the results of HOLAS 3 and the BSAP and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Convention 1974;
- Second half of 2026, under the chairmanship of Poland, reporting on BSAP implementation, considering the possible need and mandate for updating the BSAP beyond 2030; and
- Second half of 2030, under the chairmanship of Sweden, reporting on BSAP implementation, results of the HOLAS IV assessment, possible adoption of next BSAP.

2.10 The Meeting took note of the invitation by the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) to have a joint HELCOM, BALTFISH and BSAC meeting in January 2022 to inform the BSAC and BALTFISH about the new BSAP, the relevant actions relating to fisheries management and their timelines (document 2-3).

2.11 The Meeting noted a comment by CCB, supporting the organization of such a joint meeting

### **Agenda Item 3 German Chairmanship of HELCOM**

3.1 No comments were made regarding Agenda Item 3.

### **Agenda Item 4 Preparation for HELCOM 43-2022 including the Stakeholder Conference**

4.1 The Meeting endorsed the Provisional Agenda for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM 43-2022) (document 4-1) with the addition of an additional agenda item on implementation of the BSAP.

4.2 The Meeting approved the organizing of the joint HELCOM/Baltic Earth Stakeholder Conference on climate change (HSC2022) as outlined in document 4-2 and to be held online on 9-10 March 2022, and took note of the fact that the outcomes of the HSC2022 will be presented at HOD 62-2022. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the holding of the HSC2022 and noted the good timing of the HSC2022, notably in light of the recently held UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26) in Glasgow and the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

4.3 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the HELCOM Workshop on Blue Carbon Potential in the Baltic Sea Region, which was held online on 17-18 November 2021 as part of the work under the priorities set by the German chairmanship of HELCOM on climate change (document 4-3) and organized jointly by Germany and the HELCOM Secretariat. The Meeting further took note of the information that the report of the workshop will be presented at the HSC2022.

### **Agenda Item 5 Preparatory work for HOLAS 3 assessment**

5.1 The Meeting took note of and approved the updated assessment workplan for the third Holistic Assessment of the State of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS 3) (documents 5-5-Rev.1 and 5-5-Rev.2).

5.2 The Meeting took note of the current list of nominations for the Correspondence Group of national HOLAS 3 focal points (CG HOLAS3) and noted that Germany aims to provide nominations by January 2022. The Meeting invited the remaining Contracting Parties (Latvia, Lithuania and Russia) to provide national nominations to the Secretariat ([susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi](mailto:susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi)) by **28 January 2022** at the latest.

5.3 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to keep Heads of Delegation copied in all correspondence with CG HOLAS 3.

5.4 The Meeting also took note of the further specified timeline of HOLAS 3 and approved the arranging of Targeted Assessment Methodology Workshops and Data Helpdesk sessions in Spring 2022.

5.5 The Meeting welcomed the information by Russia that eutrophication data for 2020 will be submitted shortly and that Russia aims to submit data for 2021 by the data submission deadline of 31 May 2022.

5.6 The Meeting agreed on the amended timeline proposed for the eutrophication indicator evaluations in 2022, including shifting the HEAT Targeted Assessment Methodology Workshop from week 7 2022 to week 11 2022.

5.7 The Meeting took note of and approved the updated provisional outline of foreseen resource needs at the HELCOM Secretariat for HOLAS 3 (document 5-4).

5.8 The Meeting welcomed the information that Finland will contribute an additional 20.000 euro towards supporting the HOLAS 3 assessment.

5.9 The Meeting took note of the technical comments by Denmark to document 5-1-Rev.1 (document 5-8).

5.10 The Meeting took note of the information that Denmark and Russia uphold their respective study reservations on all indicators presented for approval for use in HOLAS 3, as well as the adoption of new or amended threshold values. The Meeting invited Denmark and Russia to clarify their respective national positions by **20 January 2022**, after which the approaches will be considered approved/adopted unless an alternative indicator-specific process has been agreed.

5.11 The Meeting took note of the summary of indicator development, post-STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 (document 5-1-Rev.1, 5-2-Rev.1, **Presentation 1**)

5.12 The Meeting noted that no further development has occurred for the following indicators already introduced in HOLAS II and that, consequently, no approval for their use in HOLAS 3 is necessary:

- Distribution of Baltic seals
- Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season
- Abundance of salmon spawners and smolt
- Abundance of sea trout spawners and parr
- State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community
- Inputs of nitrogen and phosphorous to the subbasins
- Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCDD)
- Perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS)
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and dioxins and furans
- White-tailed sea eagle productivity
- Oil-spills affecting the marine environment
- Trends in arrival of new non-indigenous species

5.13 The Meeting took note that for the indicator 'State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community' work related to testing new eutrophication-relevant assessment units is ongoing, at the invitation of STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021. This work will be finalized in the spring of 2022 and the recommendation for what units to use in HOLAS 3 will be presented for approval to STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

5.14 The Meeting noted that the following study reservations regarding indicators can be lifted:

- Denmark can lift its previous study reservation on the cyanobacterial bloom index indicator.
- Germany endorses the proposed threshold for copper of 30mg/kg and can therefore lift its study reservation on the indicator on copper, the indicator on continuous low-frequency anthropogenic sound, the indicator on total nitrogen concentrations, as well as the cyanobacterial bloom index, provided it retains its status as pre-core for HOLAS 3. Germany can further lift the study reservation only for open sea areas for the Seasonal succession of dominating phytoplankton group.
- Poland can lift its study reservation on the indicator for copper.

- Sweden can lift its study reservation on the indicator TBT and imposex.
- Finland can lift its study reservation on the indicator on the number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear.

5.15 The Meeting provisionally adopted the threshold values/threshold value setting methodologies and provisionally approved, noting the study reservations by Denmark and Russia, the approaches for their use in HOLAS 3, as outlined in the respective document attachments and annexes, for the following indicators:

- Abundance of waterbirds in the wintering season
- Breeding success of waterbirds
- Abundance of coastal fish key functional groups
- Abundance of key coastal fish species
- Zooplankton mean size and total stock
- Diatom/Dinoflagellate index (Dia/Dino index)
- Cumulative impact from physical pressures on benthic biotopes (CumI)
- Dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN)
- Dissolved inorganic phosphorus (DIP)
- Oxygen debt
- Water transparency
- Chlorophyll a
- Total phosphorus concentrations
- Shallow-water bottom oxygen
- Phytoplankton spring bloom intensity based on chl-a
- Metals
- Polybrominated biphenyl ethers (PBDE)
- Polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and their metabolites
- Reproductive disorders: Malformed amphipod embryos
- Diclofenac
- Radioactive substances: Cesium-137 in fish and surface waters
- Beach litter
- Litter on the seafloor
- TBT and imposex
- Copper
- Continuous low frequency anthropogenic sound
- Total nitrogen concentrations

5.16 The Meeting provisionally approved, noting the study reservations by Denmark and Russia, the approaches, and their use in HOLAS 3 as outlined in the respective document attachments and annexes, for the following indicators:

- Nutritional status of seals
- Reproductive status of seals
- Harbour porpoise distribution
- Harbour porpoise abundance
- Baltic Sea acidification
- Microlitter in the watercolumn

5.17 The Meeting took note of the fact that for the indicators 'Harbour porpoise abundance', 'Diatom/Dinoflagellate index (Dia/Dino index)', 'Total phosphorus concentrations', 'Shallow-water bottom oxygen' and 'Phytoplankton spring bloom intensity based on chl-a' further work is planned in Spring 2022, at the invitation of STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021. Possible amendments to the indicators stemming from this work will be presented for approval to STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022 and any possible new or amended threshold values will be presented for adoption to HOD 62-2022.

5.18 The Meeting agreed on the approach for the indicator 'Waterbird habitat quality' as outlined in document 5-2 rev.1 Annex 3. The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany that the information should be presented in a prominent place in the assessment, e.g. a dedicated text box.

5.19 The Meeting agreed on the following approach for the indicator 'Size structure of coastal fish (L90)': for areas and species where threshold values cannot be adopted for HOLAS 3 trend information should be presented instead.

5.20 The Meeting agreed on the following process for the indicator 'Distribution in time and space of loud low- and mid-frequency impulsive sounds': should threshold values be approved at the EU level in time to be applied in HOLAS 3 these should be used. Should EU-level threshold values not become available in time for them to be used in HOLAS 3 a qualitative indicator evaluation should be undertaken for HOLAS 3.

5.21 The Meeting took note of the information that Denmark and Sweden uphold their respective study reservations on the indicator 'Population trends and abundance of seals' regarding the LRL related to the harbour seal management units proposal. The Meeting agreed on the following approach for the indicator 'Population trends and abundance of seals' regarding the Limit Reference Levels (LRLs) related to the harbour seal management units proposal: a dedicated process, involving relevant Danish, Swedish and EG MAMA experts as well as the indicator lead, are to further consider the possibility to establish LRLs for the proposed new assessment units prior to HOLAS 3 and make a recommendation on how to approach the division of management units and corresponding LRL for HOLAS 3 and beyond to STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022 for approval.

5.22 The Meeting took note of the clarification that changing the management units for harbour seals would require updating the corresponding section outlining the agreed assessment units in HELCOM Recommendation 27-28/2.

5.23 The Meeting took note of the information that Poland upholds its study reservation on the indicator 'Cyanobacterial bloom index'. The Meeting agreed on the following approach for the indicator 'Cyanobacterial bloom index': Further work to address Poland's concerns regarding the indicators, involving Polish experts and the indicator leads, is to take place in the spring of 2022, with the aim of addressing these issues prior to the indicator evaluations in HOLAS 3. The approval of the approach, as well as the use of the indicator in HOLAS 3, is to be revisited at STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

5.24 The Meeting took note of the information that Denmark and Estonia uphold their respective study reservations on the indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear'. The Meeting noted that also Finland welcomes additional work on the indicator. The Meeting agreed on the following approach for the indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear': Further work to address Contracting Parties concerns regarding the indicator, involving Danish, Estonian and Finnish experts and the indicator lead, is to take place in the spring of 2022 under the umbrella of the BLUES project, with the aim of addressing these concerns prior to the indicator evaluations in HOLAS 3. The approval of the approach, as well as the use of the indicator in HOLAS 3, is to be revisited at STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

5.25 The Meeting took note of the work on the indicator 'Abundance of non-commercial offshore species (three-spined stickleback, flounder, brill and dab)', noting the link between some of the species and the list of commercial fish species and issues related to setting threshold values. Further work to address the outlined challenges, involving relevant national experts and the indicator lead, is to take place in the spring of 2022 under the umbrella of the BLUES project, with the aim of addressing these challenges towards HOLAS 3. The approval of the approach, as well as the use of the indicator in HOLAS 3, is to be revisited at STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

5.26 The Meeting took note of the information that Germany upholds its study reservation on German coastal waters for the indicator 'Seasonal succession of dominating phytoplankton group', due to ongoing national processes. The Meeting invited Germany would provide an update as soon as available, the latest by to STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

5.27 The Meeting agreed that any further new or amended threshold values stemming from the processes planned in spring are to be presented for adoption to HOD 62-2022. The Meeting took note of the comment by Denmark that the required duration of the review process for threshold values to be presented for adoption at HOD 62-2022 will become clear in January. The Meeting invited Denmark to approach the Secretariat with this information at their earliest convenience and further invited the Secretariat to plan the adoption process accordingly and communicate the information to the Heads of Delegation.

5.28 The Meeting took note of the updated assessment units for use in HOLAS 3 (document 5-3-Rev.1) and noted the comments by the EU welcoming the work to align assessment areas for related indicators (pelagic, benthic) and the proposed longer-term harmonization of assessment areas.

5.29 The Meeting approved the updating of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy to reflect changes in all relevant HELCOM assessment units.

5.30 The Meeting approved the use of the newly developed assessment units in the Gulf of Finland and Bornholm Basin/Pomeranian Bay for the assessment of eutrophication (and the relevant update of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy).

5.31 The Meeting mandated STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022 to approve which assessment units to use in HOLAS 3 for closely linked indicators (e.g. phytoplankton, zooplankton and benthic habitats), based on the outcome of the review of ecological relevance.

5.32 The Meeting supported the further review process (i.e. application of the same units across all indicator evaluations and assessment in the longer-term) to ensure a clearly defined and harmonized set of HELCOM assessment units, noting, however, the comments that applying the new assessment units across all relevant indicators may pose challenges.

5.33 The Meeting took note of the comments by Russia that, with regard to the new division of assessment units, there might be limitations to the available state monitoring data and welcomed that a new monitoring scheme is being developed.

5.34 The Meeting took note of the approaches for planned assessment and analyses for HOLAS 3, also taking note that some of the approaches may need to be revised as a result of the Targeted Assessment Methodology Workshop processes which will take place in the Spring of 2022 (document 5-6). The Meeting noted the request by Denmark for additional time to review the document. The Meeting agreed on the following intersessional review and in principle approval process:

- Denmark is invited to submit additional comments to the document by 17 December 2021 to the Secretariat ([jannica.haldin@helcom.fi](mailto:jannica.haldin@helcom.fi)).
- The Secretariat is subsequently invited to amend the document accordingly, retaining track changes, and submit the amended document by **21 December 2021** to Heads of Delegation for review and tacit approval by **15 January 2022**.
- Should in-principle approval not be reached following the review period, the relevant sections of the amended document are to be used as the basis for further discussion at the Targeted Assessment Methodology Workshops in Spring 2022, any subsequent changes introduced and the amended approaches, including all changes, be submitted for approval to STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022.

5.35 The Meeting further agreed that STATE&CONSERVATION 16-2022 can approve any subsequent changes introduced to the methodologies based on the Targeted Assessment Workshops in Spring 2022.

5.36 The Meeting took note of the updating of the indicator template and website towards HOLAS 3 (document 5-7).

**Agenda Item 6 Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups***Gear Group*

6.1 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the 25th Meeting of the HELCOM Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 25-2021), held online on 8-10 November 2021 (document 6-22).

6.2 The Meeting took note that GEAR is in the process of scoping a project related to improving the implementation of the ecosystem approach and ecosystem-based management under the auspices of HELCOM, planned to be submitted for external funding. The scoping is utilizing the outputs from the 2021 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference.

*Maritime Working Group*

6.3 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the 21st Meeting of the Maritime Working Group (MARITIME 21-2021), held online on 27-29 October 2021 (document 6-16), and approved that MARITIME 22-2022 will tentatively be held on 27-29 September 2022, hosted by Sweden.

6.4 The Meeting endorsed the draft revised HELCOM Recommendation 33/1 on the Unified Interpretation in Relation to Access to and Use of HELCOM AIS Data as contained in Annex 3 of the Outcome of MARITIME 21-2021, with a view to its adoption by HELCOM 43-2022.

6.5 The Meeting took note that MARITIME 21-2021 approved the Work Plan 2021-2022 for the Joint HELCOM/OSPAR TG Ballast Water Management Convention (BWMC) and Biofouling (JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING), as previously approved by the OSPAR Environmental Impact of Human Activities (EIHA) Committee.

6.6 The Meeting took note that MARITIME 21-2021 approved the Work Plan of the Cooperation Platform on Port Reception Facilities for 2021- 2023.

6.7 The Meeting discussed the document deadlines as per the HELCOM Rules of Procedure and noted *inter alia* the following views:

- the new procedure regarding manual email notification of published documents has led to situations where delegations are not aware of new documents, especially considering technical problems with the automatic notification in the HELCOM Meeting Portal.
- an approach could be considered where expert groups have shorter document submission deadlines than working groups;
- document submission deadlines that are too short may decrease efficiency as this increases the likelihood of study reservations;
- similar problems have been encountered in other working groups and other organizations.; longer deadlines do not necessarily decrease the challenges in preparing for meetings;
- intersessional work is a good way to facilitate progress despite possible study reservations during the meetings.

6.8 The Meeting encouraged the Secretariat, Contracting Parties and observers to submit meeting documents as early as possible to all meetings, ahead of the established deadlines. The Meeting noted that issues regarding automatic notifications of published documents should be resolved in the context of renewing the HELCOM Meeting Portal (c.f. document 7-2).

6.9 The Meeting considered possibilities for funding the development and publication of the annual HELCOM Overview on Port Reception Facilities (PRF Overview). The Meeting noted that the PRF Overviews are very useful and that similar publications are not available in other regions. The Meeting also noted that if funding were made available for the development of an electronic database to replace the manually

produced PRF Overviews, Contracting Parties and the Secretariat would save time and resources in future reporting on port reception facilities.

#### *Response Working Group*

6.10 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the 29th Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 29-2021) held online on 28-30 September 2021 (document 6-8) and approved that RESPONSE 30-2022 will be held on 15-18 March 2022 in Helsinki, Finland, hosted by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that RESPONSE 31-2022 will tentatively be held in October or early November 2022 hosted by Estonia.

6.11 The Meeting endorsed the draft revised Recommendation 12/7 on special cooperation in case of a chemical tanker accident in the Baltic Sea with a view to its adoption by HELCOM 43-2022 (Annex 3 of the Outcome of RESPONSE 29-2021).

6.12 The Meeting took note of the fact that RESPONSE 29-2021 approved the updated draft Work Plan for 2022-2023 of the SHORE Network.

6.13 The Meeting took note that RESPONSE 29-2021 approved the HELCOM Annual Report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea in 2020 for publication on the HELCOM webpage.

6.14 The Meeting took note of the progress in planning a feasibility study and full risk analysis for oil and HNS pollution.

6.15 The Meeting encouraged all Contracting Parties to nominate experts to the SHORE Network and EWG OWR/EG WILDLIFE, to attend meetings and contribute to the work of the groups.

6.16 The Meeting took note that RESPONSE 29-2021 had discussed a possible joint submission of the Multi-regional Marine HNS Response Manual by HELCOM, the Bonn Agreement and REMPEC to IMO PPR 9 (4-8 April 2022) for the purpose of developing an operational guide on the response to spills of HNS in the framework of the PPR. RESPONSE 29-2021 agreed that the most appropriate way forward would be for REMPEC to submit the document to PPR, and that HELCOM Contracting Parties should contact the relevant national authorities in charge of IMO PPR matters, in order to recommend that they support the document by REMPEC at PPR 9.

6.17 The Meeting congratulated Mr. Torben Iversen (Denmark) on having been elected as the Chair and Mr. Johan Genestig (Sweden) on having been elected as Vice-Chair of the Response Working Group for 2022-2023.

6.18 The Meeting took note of the draft Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on Wildlife Response (EG WILDLIFE) for 2022-2023 (document 6-6) and adopted the Terms of Reference as contained in **Annex 2** to this Outcome, including amendments proposed by Denmark.

6.19 The Meeting considered the draft Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects (EG SUBMERGED) for 2022-2030 (document 6-7).

6.20 In this context, the Meeting considered comments provided by Russia and revised the Terms of Reference by shortening the mandate period to 2026, clarifying the reference to the 2021 BSAP, adding a new task regarding fishermen and adding a new task in relation to the Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks 2007.

6.21 The Meeting also considered the need to refer to HOLAS 4 and agreed that it is premature to discuss the use of the results of EG SUBMERGED work for HOLAS 4.

6.22 The Meeting adopted the draft Terms of Reference in principle, as revised by the Meeting and set out in **Annex 3** to this Outcome. In order to allow time to consider the amendments to the Terms of Reference, the Meeting agreed that any objections are to be submitted to the Secretariat

([laura.meski@helcom.fi](mailto:laura.meski@helcom.fi)) by 20 January 2022 at the latest, and confirmed that in the absence of objections received by that date, the Terms of Reference will be considered adopted by HOD 61-2021.

#### *Pressure Working Group*

6.23 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the 15th Meeting of the HELCOM Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (PRESSURE 15-2021) held online on 2-4 November 2021 (document 6-19) and approved that PRESSURE 16-2022 will be held on 26-29 April 2022 in Sweden, if the COVID-19 restrictions allow, and that PRESSURE 17-2022 will tentatively be held online on 18-21 October 2022.

6.24 The Meeting adopted the updated Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Marine Litter (EG Marine Litter) as contained in **Annex 4** to this Outcome.

6.25 The Meeting adopted the updated Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Underwater Noise (EG Noise)) as contained in **Annex 5** to this Outcome.

6.26 The Meeting took note of the discussion and agreed procedures on starting the implementation and prioritizing the actions of the Revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP ML).

6.27 The Meeting approved that a workshop on the implementation of the RAP ML will be organized back-to-back with PRESSURE 16-2022 on 25 April 2022 in Sweden, if the COVID-19 restrictions allow.

6.28 The Meeting took note that the remaining PLC-7 project will be finalized by March 2022 for submission to HELCOM 43-2022.

6.29 The Meeting took note of the discussion on the new hot spot-related actions in the updated BSAP and organization of their regional implementation.

6.30 The Meeting adopted updated Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on Dredging/Depositing Operations at Sea (EG DREDS) for 2022-2024 (document 6-1 and **Annex 6**).

6.31 The Meeting approved the publication of the PLC-7 thematic report on effectiveness of measures to reduce nutrient inputs in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings (BSEP) series (document 6-3).

6.32 The Meeting approved the publication of the report on the HELCOM MAI core indicator on inputs of nutrients for the period 1995-2019 (document 6-14).

6.33 The Meeting approved the organizing of a PLC workshop on the effectiveness of measures and the analysis of implementation obstacles and best practices tentatively in the end of June or beginning of July 2022 (document 6-24). The Meeting considered the scope, content and invitees of the workshop and welcomed the invitation of river basin management authorities to the workshop.

6.34 The Meeting endorsed the draft revised HELCOM Recommendations 37-38/1 and 37-38/2 for adoption by HELCOM 43-2022 (document 6-4) and took note of the related HELCOM PLC-Water Guidelines (document 6-26).

6.35 The Meeting approved HELCOM's participation in the EU Regional Sea Conventions (RCSs) joint event to be organised in conjunction with the 2022 MARLICE international forum, on 20 May 2022 in Seville, Spain and approved the modality of the HELCOM contribution to the joint event based on the proposal by PRESSURE 15-2021 (document 6-2). The roundtable "Connecting seas" will be held on 19 May 2022, with an overview of the strategy on marine litter of each of the RSCs, followed by a discussion on the global agreement.

6.36 The Meeting took note of the fact that all the other RCSs have announced their participation and that the roundtable is to be considered as a starting point of the discussion among the European RSCs and the EU on the UNEA 5-2 process towards a global agreement on preventing plastic pollution. The Meeting also took note of the remark by the EU that it is good to discuss the matter at the HOD level and contribute

to the visibility of the event because this is a landmark event, which will take place after a possible UNEA 5-2 agreement on starting a global process for a legally binding instrument against plastic pollution, and also for raising awareness of the Regional Seas Conventions' exemplary work on marine litter and role in the practical implementation of such an instrument.

6.37 The Meeting endorsed the draft HELCOM Recommendation on reduction of EPS and XPS emissions for adoption by HELCOM 43-2022 (document 6-13).

6.38 The Meeting approved the publication of the report on micropollutants in effluents from wastewater treatment plants in the HELCOM BSEP series and approved that the HELCOM joint action on micropollutants in WWTPs' effluents is accomplished after publication of the report (document 6-15); with amendment on the report as follows (changes in *italic*): p. 50 in the end of chapter on Brief on technologies for removing micropollutants from wastewater to "Such criteria could also be *developed* for the Baltic Sea region *taking into account realistic and socio-economically feasible targets*".

6.39 The Meeting approved the publication of the four policy briefs on phenolic substances, PFAS, heavy metals and pharmaceuticals as HELCOM policy messages (document 6-15, attachments 2-5) after amendments as follows:

- changing the title of attachment 2 to "Policy brief on phenolic substances: nonyl- and octylphenols";
- adding to the caption on the figure of the brief on phenolic substances (p. 63 of the document) "EQS values are used here for indicative comparison but not for the assessment of contamination level";
- adding to attachment 4, (Policy brief on heavy metals) (p. 71 of the document): "Thus, continuous monitoring of heavy metals in effluents should be obligatory maintained in WWTP, *where appropriate*".

6.40 The Meeting adopted the project proposal on strengthening the HELCOM framework on hazardous substances and approved the use of HELCOM funds and, if needed, applications for possible external funding to finance the planned work, should such funds be available (document 6-23 and **Annex 7**).

6.41 The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to consider providing funding for the project, as indicated in the document, to ensure that the planned work can take place.

#### *State and Conservation Working Group*

6.42 The Meeting approved the Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Hazardous Substances (EG HAZ) for 2022-2024 (document 6-18 and **Annex 8**).

6.43 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the 15th Meeting of the HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021), held online on 4-8 October 2021 (document 6-21).

6.44 The Meeting took note of the further elaborated project proposal for updating the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II), 2022-2024 (document 6-11).

6.45 The Meeting took note of the comment by Estonia regarding the need to clarify why the Swedish Red List assessment tool Edit was chosen to be used for species assessment instead of the ConR-model developed by IUCN (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ece3.3704>). The Meeting took note of the clarification by the Secretariat that the intention is to use ConR approach as a basis for the planned development of the tool, but to ensure that it functions with the other HELCOM map and data tools, and that it can accommodate the needs of HELCOM.

6.46 The Meeting took note that Germany supports the further elaborated project proposal but cannot promise the participation of German experts.

6.47 The Meeting took note of the comment by Denmark regarding clarification of the consequences if no expert can be found for participation from a CP within one of the topics. The Meeting took note of the

clarification by the Secretariat that if no expert with knowledge for a given area or species is able to take part in the work this can potentially affect the precision and quality of a given assessment, but it will not by default exclude any species or areas from the assessment.

6.48 The Meeting adopted the further elaborated project proposal for updating the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II), 2022-2024 as in **Annex 9**.

6.49 The Meeting adopted the amended project proposal for the Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM PEG QA) (document 6-12 and **Annex 10**).

6.50 The Meeting adopted the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Bird Migration (EG B-MIGRATION) (document 6-9) noting that an editorial amendment has been introduced based on comments provided by Denmark (see **Annex 11**) as well as the clarification that OSPAR, at the moment, is not interested in joining the group, but is interested in following the group's work. ICES participation remains open. The Meeting confirmed that there are no objections from Contracting Parties should the groups be exclusively a HELCOM group.

6.51 The Meeting adopted the Terms for Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Zooplankton (EG ZOO) (document 6-10 and **Annex 12**).

6.52 The Meeting took note of the information that Estonia can lift its study reservation on the Terms of Reference for the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM Expert Group on Non-Indigenous Species (JEG NIS) for 2021-2024 and adopted the ToRs (document 6-20 and **Annex 13**).

6.53 The Meeting took note of the urgent need to nominate a HELCOM Co-Chair for the group to enable the work to commence. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to consider nominating a Co-Chair as soon as possible, and by **31 January 2022** at the latest.

#### *Agri Group*

6.54 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the Twelfth Meeting of the HELCOM Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (AGRI 12-2021), held online on 10-11 November 2021 (document 6-5) and approved that AGRI 13-2022 will be held on 6-7 April 2022 at the HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki, if the COVID-19 restrictions allow.

6.55 The Meeting congratulated Ms. Sari Luostarinen on having been re-elected as the Chair of the Agri Group for 2022 and for 2023, pending the decision by the Heads of Delegation to extend the mandate of the Group beyond 2022.

6.56 The Meeting approved the organization of the HELCOM Workshop on mitigating ammonia emissions from agriculture and BAT and BEP for animal farming on 7-8 March 2022, lunch to lunch, in Estonia or at the Secretariat premises.

#### *Fish Group*

6.57 The Meeting agreed that the current Work Plan of the HELCOM Fish Group remains valid until HOD 63-2022 (document 6-17).

#### *HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group*

6.58 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the 23rd Meeting of the joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 23-2021), held online on 16-17 November 2021 (document 6-25) and approved that HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 24-2021 will be held on 31 March -1 April 2022.

6.59 The Meeting took note of the current drafting process of the upcoming Work Plan of the Working Group for the period 2022-2024 and approved that an intersessional meeting of the Working Group (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 23A-2022), which will continue the drafting the next work plan of the Working Group, will be held online on 27 January 2022.

6.60 The Meeting took note of the fact that HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 23-2021 agreed on the prolongation of the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group mandate until 2024.

6.61 The Meeting congratulated Mr. Joacim Johannesson (Sweden) on having been re-elected as Co-Chair and Ms. Penina Blankett (Finland) on having been re-elected as Vice Co-Chair of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG from the HELCOM side.

6.62 The Meeting congratulated Mr. Kai Trümpler (Germany) on having been elected as Co-Chair of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG from the VASAB CSD/BSR side and took note that the post of Vice Co-Chair is vacant.

## **Agenda Item 7 HELCOM institutional and organisational matters**

7.1 The Meeting took note of the Audit Report and the Financial Statement of the Helsinki Commission for the financial period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, as well as of the explanatory memorandum (document 7-4-Add.1) and advised the Executive Secretary to submit them to HELCOM 43-2022 in order to have the accountables officially discharged from responsibility.

7.2 The Meeting considered the draft budget for the financial period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 (document 7-3-Rev.1) and advised the Executive Secretary to submit it to HELCOM 43-2022 for official adoption.

7.3 The Meeting, however, also noted that Germany is not in a position yet to confirm the inflation compensation for the financial year 2022-2023. Germany expects the internal decision in January 2022 and will inform the Secretariat accordingly.

7.4 The Meeting recalled the importance of achieving equal contributions in monetary terms of the Contracting Parties to the budget, as per Article 22 paragraph 3 of the Convention, and noted that Estonia reaffirmed its commitment to achieve this with regard to its national contribution.

7.5 The Meeting noted the request by Estonia for the Secretariat to provide a more comprehensive view of the whole Secretariat staff regarding to their tasks and contract periods, to complement the information provided in the document 7-3-Rev.1 attachment 4.

7.6 The Meeting noted the view of Russia that the title of Associate Professional Secretary should be re-considered so as to avoid confusion with the Professional Secretaries who are recruited in accordance with Rule 3 of the Staff Regulations for Professional Staff, whereas Associate Professional Secretaries are General Service Staff and therefore recruited in accordance with Rule 3 of the Staff Regulations for the General Staff, noting that the respective recruitment procedures differ from each other.

7.7 The Meeting considered the draft income budget estimate for the financial period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 (document 7-3-Rev.1) and advised the Executive Secretary to submit it to HELCOM 43-2022 for official endorsement.

7.8 The Meeting approved a budget transfer from the financial year 2021-2022 to allow any travel related savings to be used for the financial year 2022-2023 (document 7-3-Rev.1).

7.9 The Meeting recalled that HOD 54-2018 agreed that the current HELCOM working structure should be in place until the completion of the update of the BSAP and may be revisited in 2021 in light of the results of the update process of the BSAP.

7.10 The Meeting considered document 7-1 and agreed that to achieve the objectives set in the 2021 BSAP, there is a need to review the working structure and consider necessary adjustments to support the implementation of the actions in an optimal way. The Meeting emphasized the urgency and importance of starting implementation of the 2021 BSAP.

7.11 The Meeting took note of a concern that the restructuring process could have a negative impact on the HOLAS 3 work and timeline, and that care should be taken when proposing changes to the work

structure not to risk losing momentum on implementation activities as a consequence of a transition period resulting from the restructuring.

7.12 The Meeting took note of the Estonian proposal on updating the HELCOM working structure (document 7-5).

7.13 The Meeting was of the view that dedicated Working Groups for the BSAP segments on Sea based activities and Horizontal topics would likely not be a constructive solution due to the broad thematic scope of the actions under these segments.

7.14 The Meeting agreed that the Helsinki Convention should function as the basis for the structure of HELCOM work, acknowledging, however, that the implementation of the actions in the 2021 BSAP is a core aspect of the implementation of the convention and subsequently emphasized that any change in structure should also support the effective implementation of the BSAP.

7.15 The Meeting agreed that a technical guidance document should be prepared to support the discussions on restructuring at the meeting of Chairpersons, as well as at the Working Group meetings in the spring of 2022 and invited the Secretariat to draft such a document.

7.16 The Meeting agreed to undertake an intersessional scoping exercise regarding the possible gap, barriers and shortcomings of the current HELCOM structure in relation to the implementation of the 2021 BSAP. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to submit their views on the current structure to the Secretariat ([susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi](mailto:susanna.kaasinen@helcom.fi)) by **20 January 2022**, to support the drafting of the guidance document.

7.17 The Meeting agreed on the timeline for the restructuring as indicated in document 7-1.

7.18 The Meeting noted the comment that consideration should be given to actions in the BSAP which are cross-referenced across segments.

7.19 The Meeting noted that the division of topics and work for the State and Conservation and Pressure Working Groups would need special attention as part of the restructuring.

7.20 The Meeting approved organizing of a joint online Pressure/State & Conservation Working Group meeting to discuss the future structure, planned to take place in mid-late February 2022.

7.21 The Meeting agreed on harmonizing the naming of the HELCOM groups, as described in document 7-1.

7.22 The Meeting took note of the preliminary budget range and timetable for the renewal of the HELCOM Meeting Portal and agreed that the Secretariat can proceed according to the proposed plan (document 7-2). The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to provide further input to the Secretariat ([laura.meski@helcom.fi](mailto:laura.meski@helcom.fi)) by **20 January 2022**.

## **Agenda Item 8 Any other business**

8.1 The Meeting took note of the information by Russia that HOLAS 3 will be one of the topics of the XXII International Environmental Forum "Baltic Sea Day" to be held in St. Petersburg on 22-23 March 2022.

8.2 The Meeting took note of the initiative by the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) to identify synergies and possible cooperation opportunities between the Espoo Convention and the Regional Seas Conventions (RSCs) (document 8-3), with a first technical meeting held online on 19 November 2021, which HELCOM attended. The Meeting further took note of the information that a first draft paper on the potential cooperation possibilities will be made available in early 2022, and that a second technical meeting is planned to be held in the summer of 2022.

8.3 The Meeting welcomed the initiative and requested to be kept updated about the further work undertaken under this process.

8.4 The Meeting took note of comments by Russia that it also welcomed the initiative and noted that since Russia is not a party to the Espoo Convention, its involvement in this process would be on a voluntary basis and not constitute any legal obligation.

8.5 The Meeting took note of comments by CCB that also expressed support for the initiative, notably regarding the matter of transboundary infrastructure projects, and recalled the HELCOM Recommendation 17-3 on Information and consultation with regard to construction of new installations affecting the Baltic Sea, and which refers to the Espoo Convention.

8.6 The Meeting took note of the list of on-going projects within HELCOM and with HELCOM involvement (document 8-1).

8.7 The Meeting took note of the overview of planned meetings and exercises within HELCOM and other fora and external projects in 2022 (document 8-2). The Meeting further requested that the key meetings of relevant frameworks that may require the attendance of some Contracting Parties also be reflected in the list, in order to facilitate planning and avoid the overlapping of meetings and the Secretariat updated the meeting list accordingly as contained in document 8-2-Rev.1.

8.8 The Meeting took note of the statement by the European Union on financing and legislation as included in **Annex 14** to this Outcome.

8.9 The Meeting took note that no further comments were received after clarifications were circulated on 19 August 2021 by the Executive Secretary to respond to questions raised by the Contracting Parties on the HELCOM observer status application by the Baltic Salmon Fund. The application will be submitted to HELCOM 43-2022 for decision. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat ([rudiger.stempel@helcom.fi](mailto:rudiger.stempel@helcom.fi)) by **20 January 2022** if they are in favour of granting observer status to the Baltic Salmon Fund.

#### **Agenda Item 9      Next meeting(s)**

9.1 The Meeting recalled that HOD 60A-2021 decided to arrange HOD 62-2022 on 14-15 June 2022. However, noting that these dates overlap with the dates for the Meeting of EU Water and Marine Directors (15-16 June 2022), the Meeting decided to reschedule HOD 62-2022 to take place on 14 and 17 June 2022 as a split online meeting.

9.2 The Meeting took note that Russia will participate only on 14 June 2022 with further approval of decisions of the meeting by correspondence.

9.3 The Meeting requested the Secretariat accommodate issues requiring a decision on the first day of HOD 62-2022 insofar as possible. The Meeting noted a proposal that the Secretariat could plan for a one-day meeting.

9.4 The Meeting stressed that splitting meetings with days in-between should be an exception.

9.5 The Meeting decided that HOD 63-2022 will be held on 30 November – 1 December 2022 in Helsinki, Finland and HOD 64-2023 will be held tentatively on 14-15 June 2023 as an online meeting.

9.6 The Meeting noted the benefits of discussing budgetary issues in-person.

#### **Agenda Item 10      Outcome of the Meeting**

10.1 The Meeting adopted the draft Outcome of the Meeting as contained in document 10-1. The final Outcome, incorporating the comments by the Meeting, has been prepared by the Secretariat and made available in the HELCOM Meeting Portal.

## Annex 1 List of participants

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## Annex 2 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Wildlife Response 2022-2023

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

### 1. Background

In 2010 the Contracting Parties adopted HELCOM Recommendation 31E/6 on integrated wildlife response planning in the Baltic Sea Area. It recommends the Contracting Parties to apply Guidelines for their wildlife response planning attached to the Recommendation, and requests the Contracting Parties to develop a wildlife response plan integrated into oil pollution contingency plans either on a national or sub-national/local level and exchange the details about its contents with other Contracting Parties.

The 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting agreed to develop and adopt national wildlife response plans by 2016 and agreed to strengthen the work on OWR under HELCOM Response Working Group (WG) through a targeted expert working group and by enhancing cooperation with NGOs and the private sector, inter alia in order to accommodate the involvement of volunteers.

The work of the HELCOM Expert Group on Wildlife Response (WILDLIFE) is carried out under the supervision of the HELCOM Response Working Group and is based on this framework terms of reference

### 2. Tasks and working mode of EG WILDLIFE

The Expert Group will aim to strengthen the cooperation between HELCOM Contracting Parties in the field of oiled wildlife response. It will act as a forum for the exchange of information on progress and best practices, and facilitate the creation of joint standards and cross-border cooperation in oiled wildlife response. It will also, where possible, facilitate the training of national experts and exchange of training materials.

As a sub-group reporting to HELCOM Response Working Group, the Expert Group has the following tasks:

1. To facilitate the development of national oiled wildlife response plans in cooperation with other authorities and NGOs;
2. To arrange regular (at least once a year) meetings involving all members of the group, allowing for training and information sessions that would provide added value to the national processes;
3. To produce using the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) approved by RESPONSE 25-2018 as a reporting tool for OWR, at the end of every second calendar year, reports covering the OWR activities in the Contracting Parties and submit it to HELCOM Response Working Group for adoption. Based on the results from the reports to provide necessary support and encouragement to countries where OWR activities are less developed.
4. Resources permitting, to arrange training and information exchange activities to support and promote work of the Expert Group.
5. To contribute to involvement of NGOs and private sector in OWR activities.
6. Other tasks according to the group's needs and vision

Working mode:

To ensure resource efficiency, the group will arrange online meetings and work via correspondence and using the HELCOM Workspace. These meetings shall take place at least once a year but can be arranged more often if necessary. When necessary, face-to-face meetings shall be organized back-to-back with other HELCOM Response Working Group related events.

The Chair may invite relevant experts to attend online meetings with presentations on specific topics.

The group (Chair) will report to HELCOM Response Working Group on progress made.

Prolongation of the Expert Group should be considered at the end of the period of its mandate and based on the results of the work progress.

### 3. Members of EG WILDLIFE

Each Contracting Party shall nominate at least one representative of the appropriate state body (government or agency) to the Expert Group. The Contracting Parties may choose to nominate further members as they see appropriate.

## Annex 3 Draft updated Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Submerged Objects 2022-2026

Adopted by HELCOM HOD 61-2021.

### Rationale

Within the framework of the work of the previous HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED), considerable progress was made in the subject area of submerged munitions and other submerged hazardous objects. This is reflected not least in the work on developing a HELCOM Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Submerged Objects in the Baltic Sea (Submerged Assessment).

At the same time, it became clear during the work that further efforts and cooperation are necessary in order to continue to work together especially on the data situation in the Baltic Sea region and thus to consolidate the common operational picture of munitions and other submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea. The measures for dealing with the potential challenges posed by dumped munitions and other submerged hazardous objects are not yet coordinated and harmonized. A coordinated approach is crucial for a healthy Baltic Sea. At the same time, suggestions can be derived for other marine regions.

### Overall aims and tasks

The overall aim of EG SUBEMERGED is to contribute to the development of an action plan and regionally coordinated actions on submerged munitions and explosives of concern as well as other submerged hazardous objects, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing potential adverse effects of such objects and their constituents on the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. The Expert Group shall on one hand act as a knowledge hub for all Contracting Parties to provide the recent information on munitions and other submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea. On the other hand, the Expert Group should also accompany the coordination of regional activities that addresses the potential challenges posed by munitions and other submerged hazardous objects. Finally, the Expert Group ~~appears helpful~~ should contribute to achieving the tasks of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), referring to munitions and other submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea (actions S34 and S35).

The Expert Group will in the period of 2022 – ~~2026~~ 2030:

- Finalize the HELCOM Thematic Assessment on Hazardous Submerged Objects in the Baltic Sea (Submerged Assessment) for publication.
- Act as platform for discussions about further needed actions tackling the potential challenges posed by dumped munitions and other submerged hazardous objects.
- Contribute to a common operational picture about the distribution of munitions and explosives of concern in the whole Baltic Sea region.
- Based on the picture and a common understanding of distribution processes of munition constituents it will support Contracting Parties to identifying hot spot areas, perform site-specific risk assessments and discuss a possible prioritization of affected areas for further coordinated actions in addition to existing national ambitions for comprehensive risk managements.
- Seek cooperation with OSPAR relating to such objects close to the HELCOM area which could affect the convention area, especially in the Skagerrak.

- Continuously assess, support and consult with specific research or scientific projects to keep previously issued recommendations up to date or to add recommendations as deemed necessary
- Acting as specific stakeholder and actively convey time-sensitive information on recent findings
- Develop and maintain, as well as monitor, application of a HELCOM toolbox for assessment of site-specific environmental risks related to potential abandonment, relocation and intended recovery or clean-up of dumped munitions and contaminated wrecks;
- Update previously issued guidelines or develop new guidelines for all potentially affected groups, as deemed necessary, taking into account existing national guidelines and contingency plans;
- Develop and maintain procedures for training of crews of response vessels that can be engaged in emergency response actions involving dumped munitions;
- Review and, as appropriate, update the Guidelines for Fishermen on how to engage with submerged hazardous objects.
- Facilitating exchange of information in relation to the Nairobi Convention in case a ship sinks and poses a threat to the marine environment, human health or navigation.
- Develop and maintain a knowledge collection of best available technologies on dealing with dumped munitions and other submerged hazardous objects.

#### Participants

The EG SUBMERGED will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The Expert Group will cater for cross-sectorial expertise to carry out the tasks as needed.

#### Working procedures

The EG SUBMERGED works under the supervision of, reports to and receives guidance by the HELCOM Response Working Group according to its mandate. Additionally, the Expert Group will provide consultations and support to other HELCOM working groups as the potential challenges posed by dumped munitions and other submerged hazardous objects are of cross-sectional concerns.

The mode of work for the Expert Group will be mainly via correspondence and online meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed. Co-Chairs for the Expert group will be elected at the first meeting after approval of the Terms of Reference. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this use. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Expert group. Prolongation of the mandate for the Expert Group should be considered at the end of the working period based on identified needs.

## Annex 4 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Litter 2022-2024

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

The call for establishing this expert group has been raised through the need to (i) facilitate the implementation of the revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, (ii) develop regional core indicators on marine litter and (iii) carry out regional assessments on occurrence and impacts of marine litter in the Baltic Sea.

The duties of the expert group are detailed in the following sections to be fulfilled in the period 2022-2024, in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora. Pressure Working Group will regularly revisit the progress of the work according to these ToR and will consider, together with State and Conservation Working Group, arrangements for further work beyond 2024.

### Objectives and tasks

Facilitate the implementation of the revised Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter

As part of the work of the Pressure Working Group and in cooperation with Maritime Working Group and other groups as appropriate, the HELCOM EG Marine litter will:

- Provide expertise to facilitate practical implementation of the HELCOM Recommendation 42-43/3. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Marine Litter will support the Lead Parties for the implementation of individual actions and provide expertise to facilitate implementation of actions with no lead.
- Seek synergies with other Regional Seas Conventions, namely OSPAR, the Bucharest Convention and the Barcelona Convention, Northwest Pacific Action Plan and Arctic Council but also other international fora, such as ICES, the UN, its specialized agencies and the EU. Contracting Parties being also EU member states will regularly coordinate with the MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter.
- Provide expert input, as may be requested by HELCOM working groups e.g. Maritime WG, on relevant measures to reduce further inputs of marine litter from sea- and land-based sources and impacts of marine litter in the HELCOM area.
- Provide expert input to the relevant action in the updated BSAP.

### Monitoring and assessment

The HELCOM EG Marine Litter will act as the platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on marine litter being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts as part of the work by State and Conservation Working Group. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Marine Litter will support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM indicators on marine litter, taking account, as appropriate, of developments on these topics under the EU MSFD for the EU member states namely:

- Further develop the HELCOM pre-core indicator on marine litter on the seafloor aiming at shifting it to core indicator.
- Further work on developing the HELCOM candidate indicator on microlitter towards core indicator.
- Consider the development and establishment of biological indicators to predict for the impacts of marine litter in the Baltic Sea area.
- Building reliable knowledge base on monitoring of microlitter in storm water, effluents of sewage treatment plants and sewage sludge applied as fertilisers in the environment.

- Improve coordinated monitoring programmes for the beach litter and seafloor litter indicators Develop a proposal of a regionally coordinated monitoring sub-programme on abundance and characteristics of micro-plastics as well as other types of anthropogenic particles constituting microlitter.
- Work on developing baselines and threshold values for maximum levels of marine litter in the Baltic Sea in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties under other relevant fora.
- Update the indicator reports at regular intervals as decided in HELCOM.
- Ensure timely and quality assured delivery of indicator based assessments of marine litter.
- Provide suggestions for regional action on monitoring of litter and micro-plastics as well as other types of anthropogenic particles constituting microlitter in rivers in order to identify sources of marine litter.

### Working procedures

The expert group consists of experts nominated by Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The expert group will function as a joint expert group of Pressure WG and State and Conservation WG receiving guidance from both HELCOM working groups according to their mandates (Pressure WG overall coordination of the RAP ML; State and Conservation indicators, monitoring and assessment) and providing and receiving support from other groups, in particular Maritime WG and EG HAZ, as may be requested.

The mode of work for the expert group will be mainly via correspondence and tele-meetings, with at least one physical meeting organized annually. A Chair for the expert group will be elected. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspace dedicated to this use. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the expert group.

## Annex 5 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Underwater Noise 2022-2024

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

### Rationale

The call for establishing this expert group has been raised through the need to (i) facilitate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise, (ii) develop regional core indicators on underwater noise and (iii) carry out regional assessments on occurrence and impacts of underwater noise in the Baltic Sea.

The duties of the expert group are detailed in the following sections to be fulfilled in the period 2022-2024, in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora. Pressure Working Group will regularly revisit the progress of the work according to these ToR and will consider, together with State and Conservation Working Group arrangements for further work beyond 2024.

### Objectives and tasks

#### Facilitate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise

As part of the work of the Pressure Working Group and in cooperation with Maritime Working Group and other groups as appropriate, the HELCOM EG Noise will:

- Provide expertise to facilitate practical implementation of the HELCOM Recommendation 42-43/1. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Noise will support the Lead Parties for the implementation of individual regional actions and provide expertise to facilitate implementation of actions with no lead.
- Seek synergies with other Regional Seas Conventions, namely OSPAR, the Barcelona Convention and the Bucharest Convention, Northwest Pacific Action Plan, but also other international fora, such as the UN, its specialized agencies and EU. Contracting Parties being also EU member states will regularly coordinate with the MSFD Technical Group on Noise.
- Provide expert input, as may be requested by HELCOM working groups e.g. Maritime WG, on relevant measures to reduce pressures and impacts from underwater noise sources in the HELCOM area aiming, in the long-term, at addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species identified as sensitive to noise, whilst safeguarding the potential of the Baltic Sea for sustainable human activities.
- Provide expert input to relevant actions in the updated BSAP.

### Monitoring and assessment

The HELCOM EG Noise will act as the platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on underwater noise being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts as part of the work by State and Conservation Working Group. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Noise will support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM indicators on underwater noise, taking account, as appropriate, of developments on these topics under the EU MSFD for the EU member states namely:

- Develop and operationalize common indicators and associated definition of Good Environmental Status (GES) related to underwater noise for application in the assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea marine environment.
- Act as a platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on underwater noise being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts. In particular, support the Lead Countries in the further elaboration of the underwater noise indicators.
- Update the indicator reports at regular intervals as decided in HELCOM.

- Review the state of the art knowledge on impacts of anthropogenic noise on marine species identified as sensitive to noise in the Baltic Sea and in particular the cumulative impacts of noise from multiple activities.
- Update information on available and suitable noise mitigation measures in the Baltic Sea.
- Assist countries in the reporting of national monitoring data on continuous noise and impulsive noise events to the already established regional databases, to ensure availability of high-quality data for regular assessment of the state of underwater noise in the Baltic Sea area.
- Continue working on the analysis of sensors, devices and methods used to measure underwater noise to ensure the reliability and repeatability of the collected data.

### Participants

The expert group will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The network will cater for cross-sectorial expertise to carry out the tasks as needed.

### Working procedures

The expert group works under the mandate of Pressure WG. The expert group will receive guidance from and contribute to State and Conservation WG according to its mandate as well as from Maritime WG (on IMO related issues) and provide support to other groups, in particular HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and EG MAMA, as may be requested.

The mode of work for the expert group will be mainly via correspondence and tele-meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed. A Chair for the expert group has been elected. A detailed work plan for the expert group might be elaborated. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this use. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the expert group.

## Annex 6 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Dredging/Depositing Operations at Sea 2022-2024

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

Depositing of dredged material is one of the pressures that is to be considered within the holistic assessment of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. The HELCOM Spatial Pressure and Impact Assessment (SPIA), which is used for the assessments, reflects the spatial distribution of human induced pressures and impacts on different ecosystem components, including benthic species and biotopes. Dredging/depositing operations is one of the human activities which impacts the ecosystem components.

HELCOM Recommendation 36/2, adopted by HELCOM 36-2015 on 4 March 2015, recommends that the Contracting Parties follow the HELCOM Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material at Sea and that the Contracting Parties report on the national data on management of dredged material according to the Reporting Format of the HELCOM Guidelines.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) of the European Union included seafloor integrity into the list of descriptors for determining good environmental status. The MSFD also identified the physical loss and physical disturbance to the sea-floor and human activities which may be caused by e.g. dredging/disposal of dredged material; impact on the seabed of commercial fishing, boating, anchoring; exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources on seabed and subsoil.

HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 agreed to do regional work on developing threshold values for the adverse effects of anthropogenic physical disturbance and to develop the necessary regionally coordinated quantitative targets for the reduction of physical disturbance and physical loss caused by human activities. The Ministerial Meeting also committed to elaborate regional and national actions aiming at delivering the necessary reductions in adverse effects of physical disturbance caused by human activities.

### Objective

The HELCOM Expert Group on dredging and subsequent depositing operations at sea (hereinafter – EG DREDS):

- supports reporting and validation of data on dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- facilitates the work of the Pressure Working Group in terms of assessment of environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- cooperate with HELCOM Expert Network on Benthic Habitats (EN BENTHIC) to ensure consistency of data utilized for the assessment of environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea and impact of these activities on benthic communities;
- considers and provides expert input to all relevant actions in the updated BSAP;
- follows up the implementation of respective actions in the BSAP.

### Timeline

The expert group mandate is prolonged for additional three years (2022-2024).

### Tasks

The HELCOM EG DREDS will

- a. follow up the implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 36/2 including reporting formats and providing suggestions on updates of the documents when it is relevant;
- b. review and verify the annually reported data on dredging/depositing activities at sea according to HELCOM Recommendations 36/2 and an established verification procedure;

- c. provide support for the regional consolidated reporting on depositing of dredged material at sea to LC/LP;
- d. update and improve the HELCOM Recommendation and Guidelines for handling dredged material at sea using the best available knowledge to minimize environmental impact of these activities
- e. further develop Best Environmental Practice (BEP) and Best Available Technique (BAT) for dredging and depositing operations;
- f. support controlling the concentration of mercury in dredged material and undertake possible measures to prevent its release during dredging operations and handling of dredged material;
- g. provide methodological support for the development of the HELCOM information resources on dredging/depositing operations at sea (development pending availability of resources);
- h. guide the assessment of environmental pressures caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea with the use of the agreed methodology and based on reported data;
- i. provide expert advice regarding the assessment of environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea in the frame of HOLAS III;
- j. suggest further developments of the methodology to assess environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea with the aim to contribute to the work on developing threshold values for the adverse effects of anthropogenic physical disturbance and physical loss;<sup>1</sup>
- k. contribute to elaboration of measures to reduce physical disturbance and loss caused by dredging/depositing operations;
- l. implement any other specific tasks related to the expertise of the group by requests of the HELCOM Pressure Working Group;
- m. coordinate their activities with corresponding reporting and assessments activities of OSPAR, with the Contracting Parties members to the two Regional Seas Conventions serving as a liaison and utilizing information exchange between the secretariats, as well as with ICES and EMODNET.

#### The group will deliver (among others)

- a. The further developed methodology to assess environmental pressure caused by dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- b. Regularly updated HELCOM database on dredging/depositing operations at sea (pending availability of resources);
- c. Validated annual datasets on dredging/depositing operations at sea;
- d. Annual draft of consolidated report to LC/LP on depositing of dredged material at sea;
- e. Proposals for HELCOM measures to reduce physical disturbance and loss caused by dredging/depositing operations;
- f. Updates of the data reporting formats on dredging/ depositing operations at sea as may be needed;
- g. Regular reports to HELCOM Pressure Group;
- h. Verification procedures.

#### Working procedures and timeline

The EG DREDS will report to HELCOM Pressure Working Group and will assist other subsidiary bodies and projects of HELCOM with requested information.

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<sup>1</sup> Working on this topic should take into account the decision by the EU regarding assessment methods for the EU MSFD Descriptor 6 and the decision of the EU-MSCG (Marine Strategy Coordination Group) to task the "CIS Technical Group on Sea-Floor Integrity" to further develop assessment methods.

The EG DREDS will meet as often as necessary and will utilise video-/teleconferencing as the major working method, though physical meetings are possible, if appropriate as agreed by the Pressure Working group.

The Secretariat will provide administrative support during the meetings. The EG DREDS will record the outcomes of the meetings in form of short memos.

The EG DREDS will identify tasks that may require additional resources or are long-term tasks and may come up with proposals for projects.

The mandate of HELCOM EG DREDS will last until the end of 2024.

#### Resources needed

The Contracting Parties are to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group, and the work will rely on expert participation and contribution of the Contracting Parties. Additional resources will be sought for through various projects. HELCOM Secretariat will provide GIS expertise.

## Annex 7 Project description for strengthening HELCOM framework for hazardous substances

### 1. Title of Project

Support for strengthening the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances

### 2. Project Manager(s)

Professional Secretary Lotta Ruokanen

### 3. Proposing Party

Contracting Party	_____
Commission	_____
Subsidiary body	_____
Heads of Delegation	_____
Executive Secretary	<u>  X  </u>

### 4. HELCOM body supervising the project

Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation

### 5. Background and objectives

In Article 3 and Article 16 of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, 1992 (Helsinki Convention), the Contracting Parties agree to undertake measures to prevent and eliminate pollution of the marine environment of the Baltic and to provide pollution load data, as far as available.

The goal of the 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) with regard to hazardous substances and litter is a Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter. In order to achieve this goal a regional strategic approach and, on the basis of that approach, an action plan for HELCOM work on hazardous substances by 2024 should be developed (Action HLE1 of the BSAP).

The background for the development of the regional strategic approach was outlined in the “Background report on an update of HELCOM work on hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea” approved for publication by HOD 60-2021. The meeting also supported an extension of resources and competence within the Secretariat to coordinate regional work on hazardous substances.

The HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy sets out a framework for regular holistic assessments of the Baltic Sea’s environmental health. One of the objectives for the assessment, identified in the Strategy, is to enable the provision of data and information that links pressures on land, from the atmosphere, in coastal areas and at sea to their impacts on the marine environment. This demands a holistic approach to the problem of contamination of the aquatic environment by hazardous substances, integrating available data on sources, pathways and inputs of various contaminants with the results of monitoring in marine and coastal waters. The holistic assessment should also consider environmental quality standards and priority pollutants identified in the EU (e.g. WSD, MSFD) and global policies.

The updated Terms of Reference (ToR) and expanded responsibilities of the Expert Group on hazardous substances (EG HAZ), as presented to HOD 61-2021 for approval, also provide an outline of the foreseen task in relation to hazardous substances for the period 2022-2024, aligning with the duration of the project

proposal contained in this document. The proposed project directly addresses a number of tasks and objectives outlined in the updated ToR of EG Hazardous Substances (EG HAZ).

The recently published HELCOM indicator manual also addresses the strategic aspects of contaminants by situating HELCOM indicator and assessment work within a causal framework of Drivers-Activities-Pressures-State-Impact-Measures (DAPSIM). These major components are directly relevant for considering hazardous substances across their entire management cycle and linking that to assessments or indicators.

The above-mentioned regional commitments define objectives of this Project such as:

- Development of the strategic holistic approach document and respective plan for HELCOM work on hazardous substances, and the relevant preparatory work for achieving this.
- Strengthening of links and knowledge base of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea marine environment in relation to the DAPSIM framework, with particular focus on the steps of the framework for which current information on hazardous substances is weak (drivers, activities, pressures, impacts and measures), with a particular focus identified priority substances.

## 6. Tasks and expected results

**In order to fulfil project objectives, the following tasks will be implemented:**

- **Preparatory step 1:** Take stock of all HELCOM tools and recommendations related to hazardous substances management, identifying those which are obsolete and require revision, and initiate the revision process where it is urgently needed.
- **Preparatory step 2:** Identify the links between various international policies/initiatives (e.g. UN, EU, etc) and HELCOM, based on the mapping of relevant policies given in “Background report on an update of HELCOM work on hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea”.
- **Preparatory step 3:** Propose an update of the HELCOM framework where it does not respond to the global challenges and emerging issues (e.g. no duplication and clear interlinkages across policy initiative for a streamlines approach). Prepare a proposal on how in practical terms this should be achieved and in each case the benefits and needs.
- **Preparatory step 4:** Review the existing list of priority substances and support its revision via the development/finalization of a structured approach that can be regularly applied. Include within the approach a system for categorization, follow-up and key recommendations to be generated that support a strengthening of the management cycle tailored to key categories of substances. As a byproduct of the process, evaluate the EU MSFD and WFD criteria elements related to hazardous substances (MSFD D8 and D9, WFD Annex X priority substances and EQSD) and the relevance to preparatory step 2.
- **Supporting aspect:** Contribute to the work on hazardous substances under HOLAS III by supporting the proposed Targeted Topical Workshop on hazardous substances.
- **Supporting aspect:** Directly support the work of the HELCOM Expert Group on Hazardous Substances in accordance with its Terms of Reference and working plan.
- **Major output:** Draft a regional document on strategic holistic approach to manage hazardous substances (with an action plan) and initiate its consideration in accordance with the HELCOM rules and procedures.
- **Major output:** Carry out all the above tasks in support of and guided by the HELCOM Expert Group on hazardous substances (EG HAZ) and PRESSURE and STATE & CONSERVATION Working Groups.

**The implementation of the above-listed tasks will comprise the following deliverables:**

1. Proposals on the revision of HELCOM documents and recommendations related to hazardous substances, and harmonization with relevant regional or international processes.
2. Approach for addressing, and proposal on, the revision of the HELCOM priority list of hazardous substances.
3. Draft proposal outlining and concretizing the links and knowledge base for hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea marine environment in relation to the DAPSIM framework, with particular focus on the steps of the framework for which current information on hazardous substances is weak (drivers, activities, pressures, impacts and measures), and identified priority substances.
4. Draft proposal for improving the strategic holistic and adaptive approach to manage hazardous substances.
5. Relevant input to the HOLAS III work on hazardous substances and taking the PLC-8 work on hazardous substances into consideration.

**7. Consistency with HELCOM priorities \_\_\_\_ yes**

- In Article 3 and Article 16 of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, 1992 (Helsinki Convention);
- Baltic Sea Action Plan 2021, HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, Lubeck, Germany, 20 October 2021;
- The HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark, 3 October 2013;
- Decision of HELCOM 41-2020 on the work plan of the HELCOM Third Holistic Assessment (HOLAS III) of the Baltic Sea;
- Decision of HOD 60-2021 on extension of resources and competence within the Secretariat to coordinate regional work on hazardous substances;
- The updated ToRs and expanded responsibilities of the Expert Group on hazardous substances (EG HAZ), as presented to HOD 61-2021.

**8. Timetable**

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Deadline (quarter/year)</b>
Proposals on the revision of HELCOM documents and recommendations related to hazardous substances	I - 2023
Proposal on the revision of the HELCOM priority list of hazardous substances	III - 2023
Draft regional document on strategic holistic and adaptive approach to manage hazardous substances	IV - 2023

**9. Budget (taking into account financial year from 1 July to 30 June)****9.1 Total Costs**

68 020 Euro

**9.2 Costs divided per financial year**

2022/23 – 45 347 Euro

2023/24 – 22 673 Euro

### 9.3 Sources of financing divided per financial year

HELCOM budget:

Financial year 2022-2023: 22 673 euro

Financial year 2023-2024: 15 346,80 euro

Missing financing: 30 000 euro

## 10. Additional requests (workforce, equipment, facilities, etc.)

### 10.1 From the Contracting Parties

The funds allocated and planned for the project do not cover all work needed for the update of the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances, leaving a potential shortfall of 30 000 euros. Contracting Parties are invited to contribute to the filling this gap so that the project activities can be duly carried out, and to contribute actively to the development and consideration of documents aimed at ensuring regional acceptance of the proposed approaches. Ideally, this contribution should not be limited to the delegation of national experts to the expert and working groups considering drafts of respective documents. Rather, national contributions should also include the allocation of resources to take the lead in the development of specific themes which the Contracting Parties feel require additional support and for which specific expertise is nationally available.

### 10.2 From the Secretariat (not financed from the project budget)

The Project will be supported by the Secretariat.

## 11. Organization of the project

The project will be carried out by a Project Coordinator recruited by the Secretariat. The project is planned to start in July 2022 and to end by the end of the year 2023, covering 18 months of working time for the Project Coordinator.

The key requirements identified for this role are a background in environmental chemistry and a broad understanding or experience of international policy in the field of hazardous substances. The Project Coordinator coordinates the work and contributes to the implementation of the project tasks, guided by the HELCOM Expert and Working Groups identified (i.e. EG on hazardous substances, and the PRESSURE and State&Conservation WGs), as well as the relevant Professional Secretaries and the Indicator Manager. The Project Coordinator is involved in the collecting of information, outlining of the project products and creating their content, preparing material for and reporting progress to the relevant meetings and organizing workshops etc. as relevant to ensure the success of the project. The Project Coordinator contributes to the work of other HELCOM expert and working groups involved in the implementation of the project tasks, as required under the outlined tasks.

## 12. Signature of the Project Manager(s)

## 13. Opinion of the Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary supports the Project proposal.

## 15. Decision of the Heads of Delegation

Outcome of HOD 61-2021

to establish  not to establish the project.

## Annex 8 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Hazardous Substances 2022-2024

Adopted by HOD 61-2021 (via State and Conservation and Pressure Working Groups)

### Duration of workplan:

2022-2024.

### Background:

The HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances (EN-HZ), established at the HELCOM Heads of Delegation meeting 48-2015, was created to support the HELCOM holistic assessment of the ecosystem health based on hazardous substances. The initial period of this group, 2015-2018, culminated in the production of 10 HELCOM indicators for hazardous substances and the thematic assessment on hazardous substances for the State of the Baltic Sea report 2018 (HOLAS II). The second mandate period, 2018-2021, focused on further developing assessment structures towards HOLAS III, improvements in the coverage, threshold values, and application of existing HELCOM indicators and assessments (including the integrated assessment of hazardous substances), development of new indicators (e.g. copper), and a number of emerging topics have also been considered (e.g. screening, sediment cores, SOM work, priority substances).

In 2021, to better reflect the work of the group and the proposed change in scope and mandate accompanying the approval of the updated ToRs, the name of the group was also changed to Expert Group on Hazardous Substances (EG HAZ).

### Purpose:

The purpose of the group is to facilitate and further develop the coordination of regional work on hazardous substances, in support of the implementation of the [Baltic Sea Action Plan](#) (as updated in 2021) and its relevant goals ('Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter') and subsequent commitments. This relates in particular to the following BSAP ecological objectives:

- Marine life is healthy;
- Concentrations of hazardous substances are close to natural levels;
- All sea food is safe to eat;
- Minimal risk to humans and the environment from radioactivity.

These goals and objectives account for a wide variety of chemical substances and human activities, the management of which necessitate a holistic approach, both on land and at sea, involving measures addressing legacy pollutants (e.g. heavy metals, dioxins, organotins) and contaminants of emerging concern (e.g. pharmaceuticals or certain groups of PFASs). Such a holistic approach requires crossover between relevant HELCOM groups and a mechanism for identification of regional priorities using best available scientific knowledge, including a process that clearly acknowledges emerging challenges. In addition to regional cooperation on such issues, cooperation with global treaties will be an important way to address sources of contaminants with inputs occurring beyond the regional boundaries.

The framework for HELCOM monitoring and assessment activities is set out in Articles 16, 17, 18 and 24 of the Helsinki Convention. The Strategy identifies basic principles and common understanding of the good environmental status of the Baltic Sea based on the agreed visions, goals and ecological objectives, and jointly developed quantitative targets and associated indicators. This requires regional coordination and methodological harmonization of national monitoring activities based on the shared best available scientific knowledge. Reliable and region-wise compatible information on the Baltic Sea environmental status should

be used in policy making at the international, regional and national levels, ensuring that adequate decisions and necessary measures for pursuing good environmental status of the Baltic Sea are taken.

To address these issues, the group will develop plans and documentation towards harmonized monitoring and assessments, develop of a holistic approach for the management of hazardous substances that covers all parts of the management cycle in the Baltic Sea region, provide expert input into HELCOM work related to hazardous substances, and address specific aspects identifies within the following ToRs and workplan. The Work will be guided by the relevant HELCOM Working Groups to ensure solid integration of all developments.

### Scope:

The overall scope of the expert group is to facilitate regional cooperation towards the vision, goals and objectives of the BSAP, including identifying and specifying necessary projects according to the needs under the BSAP and subsequent commitments. In addition, a key aim will be to build towards a holistic regional approach for addressing hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea region (i.e. encompassing the details addressed under objectives and tasks), an approach that ensures regular incorporation of new or emerging issues, and is documented in a clear and implementable way within HELCOM and its existing structure. If possible, the option to implement these projects by national funding or joint research applications should also be considered (e.g. EUSBSR or Interreg). Further, the Group is a platform for exchange of experiences as well as harmonization of methods concerning the work with hazardous substances, indicators and integrated assessments. Consideration should also be given to collaborative work with relevant groups (e.g. other HELCOM expert groups or Working Groups) or organizations (e.g. OSPAR, EU, EMEP, CLRTAP, ICES).

### Objectives:

The objectives listed below provide a broad overview of relevant issues. These may be long-term/rolling issues that will be permanent fixtures on the ToRs or highly specific tasks identified. The detailed information and requirements to attain these objectives is provided in the subsequent task list that is then utilised to populate the workplan.

- To identify and link national work with HELCOM work and foster an exchange of information related to hazardous substances within the region;
- To provide expert input to relevant HELCOM groups and processes related to hazardous substances;
- To develop a holistic regional approach to address the full management cycle of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea region;
- To support the improved integration of information on hazardous substances within a causal framework (e.g. loads, measures, etc) into the group's discussion and products;
- Regularly review and maintain an up-to-date overview of substances (including pharmaceuticals) that are considered hazardous and of priority in the Baltic Sea region;
- To support risk-based evaluation for substances where effects may be unknown or there are combined effects, including the further development of biological effects assessments;
- To actively participate in HELCOM processes that address hazardous substances or relevant indicator and assessment development, including providing proposals to HELCOM working groups on requirements such as threshold values and substances of concern:
- To identify funding and project needs and opportunities (national and regional/international) to support the work and objectives of the group.

The expanded scope and tasks of the joint-Expert Group is expected to require an altered way of working to ensure a clear division of tasks (amongst the Contracting Parties, and also between the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat), will require additional resources and potentially new nominations to the group, is expected to involve intersessional work (likely withing topic teams), and will require a high degree of coordination within meetings.

## Tasks:

The tasks listed below provide a more detailed and step-wise interpretation of the broad objectives and will be used to populate the workplan for the work of the group for the specific period of the ToRs. The tasks of the group cover a wide range of different aspects related to hazardous substances (or contaminants), and can be considered to include all hazardous substances/contaminants that are not encompassed by other designated HELCOM groups (i.e. excludes: marine litter, underwater noise, radioactive substances and oil spills). The group's activities link to the following tasks:

### Information exchange

- Identify, discuss and bring to the fore the outcomes of relevant national and regional projects and/or experience so that best practices can be developed on the regional level;
- To foster an exchange of information related to hazardous substances within the region, both between Contracting Parties and within HELCOM processes and groups;
- Bring relevant information from other regional, international and global processes (e.g. UN, EU, WFD, MSFD, Urban Wastewater Directive, River Basin Commissions, other relevant Conventions etc) to the fore to ensure relevant issues are addressed in HELCOM;
- Where required, participate in relevant regional, international and global initiatives, and if required present HELCOM work and developments related to hazardous substances;
- Bring national concerns and achievements to the forum so that latest developments can be considered and necessary proposals made within the HELCOM working structure.

### Holistic regional approach

- Review the current summary and proposals provided under the '[Regional policy document on hazardous substances](#)';
- Review all HELCOM policy initiatives related to hazardous substances and consider their relevance, compatibility with other policies, and their need for renewal/update/removal;
- Carry out a regional review of priority substances (see task below) based on the approach previously discussed within EG HAZ (data sources: evaluate national data, HELCOM data, COMBINE data, screening data, relevant regional and international lists);
- Design a process by which such a review can be implemented once during a given management cycle (e.g. as follow up to a HOLAS assessment and/or regional screening campaign);
- Initiate and support the development of measures and proposals to address the BSAP objectives;
- Develop a structured and viable holistic regional approach that establishes a clear and structured strategy to address hazardous substances throughout their management cycle in the Baltic Sea region;
- Include relevant processes detailed below to the holistic regional approach (e.g. application of a causal framework, regular screening, review of priority substances and substances of emerging concern).

### Substances of priority and emerging concern

- Maintain an up-to-date overview of hazardous substances (including pharmaceuticals, micropollutants, and substances of emerging concern) and their respective monitoring;
- Regularly review the overview of substances that are considered hazardous and of priority in the Baltic Sea region (including evaluation of the relevant MSFD criteria elements), adding or removing substances based on best available knowledge;
- Incorporate regular regional screening (target and non-target), and nationally/internationally derived information, into the review process;
- Engage in discussion, and provide expert opinion on what substances are considered as priority, and where appropriate action is required related to these substances; Ensure that new issues/substances of concern (including e.g. increases in antimicrobial resistance occurrence), and relevant expert proposals, are highlighted to the relevant HELCOM Working Groups;
- Ensure potential offshore sources of hazardous substances are also addressed via such approaches.

## Causal framework

- Maintain awareness of substances of potential risk to the Baltic Sea environment, their sources and pathways, including offshore sources and sources outside of the HELCOM area;
- Collate and exchange information on the use of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea region, their sources, pathways and loads;
- Evaluate and document potential environmental risk from the identified substances;
- Better incorporate substance input and load information into the group's work (e.g. PLC, EMEP), including within indicator development (e.g. drivers, activities, pressures);
- Support the development and proposal of suitable measures to address hazardous substances or mitigate their impacts, based on the best available techniques and best environmental practices;
- Further develop the hazardous substances work and products to address all relevant stages of the HELCOM causal framework, DAPSIM (e.g. [HELCOM indicator manual, p17](#));
- Explore the potential to develop pressure related evaluations, in cooperation with PLC, inclusive of linking state and pressure components (e.g. status indicators and inputs).

## Monitoring

- Review the policy requirements for hazardous substances (linked to the review of priority substances and indicator requirements/development), including the criteria and element requirements of the MSFD;
- Revise existing monitoring guidelines to ensure all relevant parameters for successful indicator assessments is included;
- Review monitoring distribution and structure from the regional perspective and consider existing proposals (e.g. master stations, outputs from BONUS SEAM and FUMARI) and develop proposals to incorporate relevant components;
- Develop monitoring guidelines for all relevant substance or substance groups monitored within HELCOM, and provide guidance on best practice for substances of concern so that harmonized data collection can be beneficial for future assessments;
- In cooperation with HELCOM PLC, develop guidelines for monitoring of hazardous substances in inland waters and at point sources to improve the HELCOM pollution load compilation for hazardous substances;
- Develop relevant monitoring guidelines for other approaches that offer potential insights related hazardous substances (e.g. sediment cores);
- Maintain an updated catalogue of relevant Monitoring and Assessment Guidelines in line with HELCOM processes.

## Indicators

- Act as the platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on hazardous substances to support Lead and Co-Lead Countries and appointed experts developing them;
- Review threshold values and methodological requirements in line with any new developments that occur (e.g. EU processes, better scientific knowledge, national processes), and with respect to other commitments by Contracting Parties (e.g. under the EU);
- Propose new indicators of relevance to the region (e.g. to address emerging issues or substances), inclusive of threshold values, and an approach for their development;
- Identify areas where it is relevant to collaborate or harmonise with external organisations (e.g. OSPAR or the EU) and inform the relevant Working Groups, e.g. when setting new threshold values, reviewing existing ones, developing new indicators;
- Further develop the hazardous substances indicators within the HELCOM causal framework, DAPSIM (e.g. [HELCOM indicator manual, p17](#)), for example to better address loads/inputs, sources and trends;
- Identify possibilities to develop pressure (e.g. input) indicators, including relevant input limits;
- Update the core indicator reports at regular intervals, as decided in HELCOM;

- Ensure timely and quality assured delivery of indicator-based assessments of hazardous substances, including integrated assessments.

#### Assessments

- Support and validate the development of the hazardous substances tools for the automated calculation of HELCOM hazardous substances assessments (indicators and integrated assessments);
- Further develop a regional approach to address the need for trophic level and tissue specific correlations/correction factors;
- Further develop assessment(s) of biological effects (including linkages to the EG MAMA health team) to address multi-factor (combined) pressures and risk evaluations;
- Further develop the applications of sediment core analyses, including for addressing the evaluation of historic hazardous substances inputs, background concentrations, emerging substances, and the effect of measures;
- Support relevant groups addressing contamination hotspots (marine and terrestrial) and dumped munitions that have potential direct or indirect inputs to the Baltic Sea environment;
- Address the assessment requirements of acute pollution occurrences and support other HELCOM groups (e.g. IWGAS and RESPONSE) to define appropriate monitoring and assessment procedures that also meet policy requirements.

These overall tasks provide the framework to guide the work of the Group on implementation which depends on availability of resources. If possible, the Group might be a platform to develop and apply for external funded projects in order to accomplish the listed objectives.

#### Reporting

- The Chair(s) will report to State and Conservation and Pressure Working Groups regularly, i.e. for the information document deadline of each working group meeting. The activity report should consist of information on activities and developments which have taken place since the previous report, a list of links to the meeting sites of previous meetings or workspaces containing documents, and a list of aspects on which decisions or guidance from those working groups are required. A template for the reporting will be provided by the Secretariat. Relevant Comment and Decision documents will also be submitted to Working Groups as the need emerges.

#### Membership

The Group will consist of experts nominated by Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures.

#### Validity of ToR

The work of the group is open ended in that the requirement for a group to address hazardous substances in line with the objectives of the BSAP is ongoing. However, the ToRs and in particular the workplan will be reviewed and, as necessary revised, every three years.

This review and revision is to take place in line with the relevant HELCOM meetings prior to the end of 2024.

#### Organization of work

The expert Group will function under and received guidance from the HELCOM Working Groups State and Conservation and Pressure and in accordance with 3-year workplan approved by these groups.

The Expert Group will elect a Chair or co-Chairs for the group for a 3-year term.

The mode of work for the expert Group will be mainly via correspondence and online meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed and via request to the relevant Working Groups. It is proposed that physical meetings may take the form of meetings that address one of a few specific topics (similar in purpose to workshops) where progress would be best achieved in such an environment.

To support the integration of a broader range of expertise and topics, meeting agenda items will be clustered to group related topics as far as possible and thereby allow relevant experts to join. In addition, to strengthen the development on specific topics voluntary 'topic teams' within the Expert Group will be established, i.e. topic teams addressing biological effects or sediment cores, or the development of the holistic approach.

The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Group. The meetings, documents and products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this purpose. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Group.

## Workplan

The table below provides an overview of the tasks identified above in the ToRs, and includes relevant links to the updated BSAP 2021. Timeline of work (ongoing and dedicated focus for tasks/actions).

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
<b>1</b>	<b>Link national work and HELCOM work to exchange information related to hazardous substances within the region</b>													
1.1	Share national experiences to support implementation of best practices	EG HAZ meeting		EG HAZ meeting		Ongoing								
1.2	Bring relevant information from other regional, international and global processes to the fore in HELCOM											Relevant input to 3		Ongoing
1.3	Where required, participate in relevant regional, international and global initiatives											Relevant input to 3		Ongoing
1.4	<i>BSAP 2021 HL2: Develop national programmes with a particular focus on hazardous substances which are not adequately regulated by other policies.</i>													Ongoing
<b>2</b>	<b>Input to relevant HELCOM groups and processes related to hazardous substances</b>													
2.1	Regular reporting to WGs (PRESSURE and STATE&CONSERVATION) and interaction with other relevant groups (and HOD if relevant)		WGs		WGs	Ongoing								
<b>3</b>	<b>Develop a holistic regional approach to address the full management cycle of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea region</b>													
3.1	Review the current summary and proposals provided under the													NA

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	<a href="#">‘Regional policy document on hazardous substances’</a>													
3.2	Review all HELCOM policy initiatives related to hazardous substances and consider their relevance, compatibility with other policies, and their need for renewal/update/removal													NA
3.3	Summarize and evaluate best approaches for direct cooperation and integration with other relevant ongoing international processes						Link to 1							NA
3.4	Further development of conceptual approach to evaluate new substances and review priority substances based on the approach previously discussed within EG HAZ								Link to 6					Ongoing towards 2025
3.5	Further develop the causal framework (DAPSIM) aspect of hazardous substances within which the holistic approach is to be established (including measures).													NA
3.6	<i>BSAP 2021 HL3: Submit to HELCOM by 2023 an account listing, as detailed as possible, the planned and implemented measures to reduce releases of hazardous</i>							WG	HOD					NA

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	<i>substances in the environment, including available knowledge on their effects.</i>													
3.7	<i>Guided by the Working Groups, support the development of following BSAP 2021 actions (see list of them below the table), in particular related to developing measures or suitable follow-up actions: HL4, HL5, HL6, HL7, HL8, HL11, HL12, HL14, HL15, HL16, HL17, HL18, HL19, HL20, HL25, HL26, HL27, HL29 and HL30.</i>	Support WGs	Link to strategic approach	Link to strategic approach	Link to strategic approach	Support WGs	2025 and ongoing							
3.8	<i>BSAP 2021 HL1: Develop a regional strategic approach and, on the basis of that approach, an action plan for HELCOM work on hazardous substances by 2024</i>				WGs		WGs		WGs		WGs		2024 HOD	NA
3.9	<i>BSAP 2021 HL11: Organize continuous follow-up of the work on hazardous substances under various global and EU policies as well as in Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) starting from 2024, and actively influence these processes by promoting international actions identified as necessary to</i>									Link to strategic approach	Link to strategic approach	Link to strategic approach		Ongoing

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	<i>improve the environmental status with respect to hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea.</i>													
<b>4</b>	<b>Improved integration of information on hazardous substances within a causal framework (e.g. loads, measures, etc) into the group's discussion and products</b>													
4.1	Develop an improved understanding of hazardous substances within a causal framework (including offshore sources) to support an evaluation of drivers, sources, activities, pathways and load so that aspects such as risk and measures can also be better addressed. Improve cooperation with other relevant groups (e.g. IWGAS, PLC, EMEP).					Link to 7			Link to 7			Link to 3		Ongoing
4.2	<i>BSAP 2021 HL6: Establish a chemical product register to be built upon, e.g. the EU REACH (EC1907/2006) framework, by 2025</i>									Relevant input to 3		Support WGs,		2025
4.3	<i>BSAP 2021 HL22: Improve knowledge base on occurrence of pharmaceutical substances in the environment, their persistence and harmful effects and ensure availability of this information for broad expert community by 2025.</i>								Relevant input to 3, 5 and 6			Relevant input to 3		2025

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
4.4	<i>BSAP 2021 HL21: Introduce by 2027 measures based on the best available scientific knowledge and technologies to restrict the use and prevent releases of perfluorinated alkyl substances, phenolic compounds with endocrine disrupting effects and chlorinated paraffins.</i>								Relevant input to 3 and 5			Relevant input to 3		2027
<b>5</b>	<b>Review and maintain an <i>up-to-date overview of substances</i> (including pharmaceuticals) that are considered hazardous and of priority in the Baltic Sea region</b>													
5.1	<i>BSAP 2021 HL9: Establish procedures by 2025 to utilize information obtained under various policies and policy frameworks addressing the use of chemicals (e.g. Stockholm Convention, SAICM successor, REACH Regulation, Water Framework Directive, Industrial Emissions Directive etc) to prioritize measures targeting regional contaminants and to identify emerging pollutants of high concern.</i>								Relevant input to 3			Relevant input to 3		2025
5.2	<i>BSAP 2021 HL10: Establish a mechanism for managing the HELCOM list of priority substances starting from 2025 and respond to screening and assessment results pointing out</i>								Relevant input to 3			Relevant input to 3		2025

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	<i>regional challenges for the Baltic Sea environment and contaminants of emerging concern.</i>													
5.3	<i>BSAP 2021 HL23: Identify priority pharmaceuticals by 2024 utilising the best available knowledge on their releases into the aquatic environment, environmental effects and available data on their use in the region, for efficient risk reduction and for subsequent integration of these substances to HELCOM assessments, as indicators of the state of the Baltic Sea and environmental pressure.</i>									Relevant input to 3				NA
5.4	Maintain a regularly updated overview of hazardous substances (including pharmaceuticals, micropollutants, and substances of emerging concern) and their respective monitoring that is supported by a broad information base (i.e. screening and national/international lists or overviews) and can													Ongoing

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	inform relevant follow up actions.													
<b>6</b>	<b>Support <u>risk-based evaluation</u> for substances where effects may be unknown or there are combined effects, including the further development of biological effects assessments</b>													
6.1	BSAP 2021 HL28: Address substances of emerging concern by commencing recurrent screening campaigns starting from 2021 including broad analytical techniques such as suspect screening and non-target screening methods.			Relevant input to 7					Relevant input to e and 5			Relevant input to 5 and 5		Ongoing
6.2	BSAP 2021 HL13: By 2028 develop further relevant monitoring for the biological effects of hazardous substances in order to facilitate a reliable ecosystem health assessment.					Link to 7			Link to 7					2028
6.3	Further develop assessment(s) of biological effects (including linkages to the EG MAMA health team) to address multi-factor (combined) pressures and risk evaluations;		Link to 7											Ongoing
<b>7</b>	<b>Actively participate in HELCOM processes that address hazardous substances or relevant indicator and assessment development, including providing proposals to HELCOM working groups on requirements such as threshold values and substances of concern:</b>													
7.1	General topics where input required to HELCOM processes													Ongoing

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
7.2	Develop, review and improve the HELCOM indicators on hazardous substances to ensure relevant substances are addressed, indicators are operational and that threshold values remain valid. Increase harmonization between relevant organizations or regions where appropriate.													Ongoing
7.3	Support indicator development within a causal framework to also address relevant drivers and pressure indicators where viable and appropriate.			Link to HOLAS III										Ongoing
7.4	HOLAS III – data													NA
7.5	HOLAS III – indicators													NA
7.6	Further develop and maintain operational hazardous substances assessment tools.													Ongoing
7.7	Further develop the applications of sediment core analyses, including for addressing the evaluation of historic hazardous substances inputs, background concentrations, emerging substances, and the effect			Link to HOLAS III										Ongoing

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	of measures (including relevant guidelines);													
7.8	HOLAS III – Thematic Assessment													NA
7.9	Review of indicators and gap evaluation to support new indicator development and priorities or required adjustment.													Ongoing towards HOLAS IV
7.10	Further develop a regional approach to address the need for trophic level and tissue specific correlations/correction factors													Ongoing towards HOLAS IV
7.11	Address the assessment requirements of acute pollution occurrences and support other HELCOM groups (e.g. IWGAS and RESPONSE) to define appropriate monitoring and assessment procedures that also meet policy requirements													Ongoing towards HOLAS IV
7.12	Support relevant groups addressing contamination hotspots (marine and terrestrial) and dumped munitions that have potential direct or indirect inputs to the Baltic Sea environment;													Ongoing
7.13	<i>BSAP 2021 HL24: Develop guidance for the</i>													2025

Task	Action	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	Ongoing
	<i>environmental monitoring and analysis of pharmaceuticals identified as indicators of the state of the Baltic Sea by 2025.</i>													
7.14	Review and update all relevant Monitoring and Assessment guidelines to ensure up to date and providing complete coverage.													Ongoing
<b>8</b>	<b>Identify funding and project needs and opportunities (national and regional/international) to support the work and objectives of the group</b>													
8.1	Identify national, regional or international funding opportunities to support the work.													Ongoing

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[Additional BSAP 2021 actions not directly or only partially included in the work plan above.](#)

These actions listed below either require additional guidance and input from the Working Groups on their full implementation, or are actions for which WG level implementation will likely require support from EG HAZ.

BSAP 2021 HL4: Strengthen and update HELCOM recommendations for industrial releases of hazardous substances by applying information produced under the EU Industrial Emissions Directive and other sources in order to sufficiently protect the Baltic Sea environment.

BSAP 2021 HL5: Decrease the emissions of hazardous substances from small scale emitters in urban areas (municipal entities, businesses and private households) by chemical-smart purchasing strategies, substitution and awareness raising campaigns.

BSAP 2021 HL6: Establish a chemical product register to be built upon, e.g. the EU REACH (EC1907/2006) framework, by 2025.

BSAP 2021 HL7: Launch educational and information campaigns by 2025 to raise public awareness regarding responsible handling of hazardous substances in household chemicals and articles to prevent their release into the environment.

BSAP 2021 HL8: Introduce requirements regarding content of chemicals of high regional environmental concern in public procurement procedures by 2025 and provide support for follow-up.

BSAP 2021 HL11: Organize continuous follow-up of the work on hazardous substances under various global and EU policies as well as in Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) starting from 2024, and actively influence these processes by promoting international actions identified as necessary to improve the environmental status with respect to hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea.

BSAP 2021 HL12: HELCOM participation starting from 2023 as member in Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management High Ambition Alliance (SAICM HAA) to support international cooperation on global chemical challenges that influence the state of the Baltic Sea. Identification of global challenges that are of importance for the Baltic Sea that HELCOM will put on the SAICM HAA agenda.

BSAP 2021 HL14: Encourage the use of alternative less toxic metals and other materials to replace lead in fishing gear and shooting bullets with the aim to minimize harmful use of metallic lead.

BSAP 2021 HL15: In order to decrease dioxin emissions, establish information campaigns and other instruments which focus on the quality and species of firewood, and what is burned in small-scale combustion appliances, by 2025.

BSAP 2021 HL16: Enhance implementation of the UNEP 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury by those Contracting Parties that are parties to this Convention and encourage its ratification by HELCOM countries that are not yet parties to the Convention.

BSAP 2021 HL17: Undertake all possible measures to reduce mercury emissions from energy sector by 2028.

BSAP 2021 HL18: Control concentration of mercury in dredged material and undertake possible measures to prevent its release during dredging operations and handling of dredged material.

BSAP 2021 HL19: Introduce the ban of the use of mercury-based amalgam in dentistry by 2030, except when deemed strictly necessary.

BSAP 2021 HL20: Establish by 2023 and maintain procedures (rules) to handle mercury containing wastes to prevent entering of the contaminant to the environment, including public information on the procedures (rules).

BSAP 2021 HL25: Organize an information campaign on what not to flush by 2025 (addressing chemicals, pharmaceuticals and litter).

BSAP 2021 HL26: Strengthen the collection of unused pharmaceuticals from the public in the Baltic Sea region by 2026.

BSAP 2021 HL27: In cooperation with health care institutions, increase awareness and knowledge of consumers about pharmaceuticals containing substances that are persistent and harmful for the environment, when scientifically justified information is available.

BSAP 2021 HL29: Limit the use of firefighting foam containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at sea and in the catchment area and promote sustainable alternatives by 2027.

BSAP 2021 HL30: Minimize the release of biocides from antifouling products to the marine environment, and preferably by 2027 replace use of biocidal antifouling products with biocide-free alternatives on structures, equipment and recreational craft in cases not already subject to the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships when available and environmentally and technically feasible.

## Annex 9 Project description for reviewing the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II)

### 1. Title of Project

HELCOM project for reviewing and updating the threat status of species and habitats/biotopes in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM RED LIST II) 2022-2024

### 2. Project Manager(s)

Project Coordinator will be hired by the Secretariat for the whole 2-year time period.

### 3. Proposing Party

Contracting Party \_\_\_\_\_  
 Commission \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subsidiary body  \_\_\_\_\_  
 Heads of Delegation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Executive Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. The body supervising the project

State and Conservation Working Group and Professional Secretary.

### 5. Target and activities

The aim of the suggested project is to review the status of red-listed species and red listed habitats/biotopes in the Baltic Sea, based on the outcomes and lessons learned by the previous HELCOM Red List project finalized in 2013 and utilizing the updated HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea macro species 2.0.

Regularly reviewing the status of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes will enable the tracking of long-term trends in the status of the Baltic Sea biodiversity and show changes in the status of species and habitats/biotopes. This will, for example, enable assessing whether actions taken to halt the loss of biodiversity have been effective.

Repeated iterations of the work bring many benefits, such as:

- a difference in results can be visible for short-lived species
- knowledge gaps are filled when assessments are carried out regularly
- continuity of the work is ensured with more frequent assessments
- enables following of changes in the status
- the possibility to stay up to date in comparison to the work done globally, to IUCN recommendations and to work done nationally
- the results of the Red List of species work being available to the large number of other work strands utilizing it
- In general work on the regional level would ensure better assessments in relation to biogeographic boundaries

Like all HELCOM assessments, an updated Red List assessment functions as an integral part of keeping track of the progress and effectiveness of HELCOM commitments and can help to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of measures by targeting areas or species identified to be of priority. The Red List is intrinsically linked to a broad set of commitments, both within HELCOM and beyond, and would provide relevant information for assessing the fulfillment of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, HELCOM Recommendations 37-2 and 40-1, as well as a number of Recommendations targeting relevant species directly, commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and UN Sustainable Development Goals (see Annex 1 for an overview).

An updated assessment of the Red List of species and habitats/biotopes would provide a reference point for those CPs not currently planning Red List work, as a regional assessment shows the trend of the assessed species and habitats/biotopes throughout its distribution, not only in the areas in which new data has been collected, and

incorporates increased understanding of the assessment procedure overall, as well as of other linked parameters, in addition to any available new data. Based on the current knowledge gaps and needs, assessments for macrophytes and benthic invertebrates on a HELCOM level is much needed.

The results from an updated Red List are also a prerequisite to addressing other related topics, such as MPA related assessments, possible effects of climate change, and ecosystem services etc.

#### Resource requirements

In comparison to the previous RED LIST project a number of resources are now available which were not available in 2010-2013, including technical tools, infrastructure, and guiding material. It is the intention to utilize these resources as much as possible to facilitate the work. Effort has been made to elaborate a project that would require a minimum of resources for the work on the part of the Contracting Parties and nominated experts, based on the experience of the previous Red List project. The main bulk of the assessment workload will be on the Project Coordinator, with State and Conservation approving collated guidelines and procedures and the final products.

National expert participation is expected in relation to data submission, reviewing and approving preliminary results, workshop participation and, should any inconsistencies be identified in the initial assessment, to approve the amended results remotely (the amendments will be done by the Project Coordinator/project researcher based on instructions from the workshop) as well as to review and, if necessary, provide information to update the Species and Habitat Information Sheets. Wherever possible work will be conducted online.

National participation is proposed to take the form of topical task teams, aligned with the groupings in the Red Lists, which will function as the main national contact point for matters related to their respective topics. In addition, the plan presented in this document includes the involvement of preexisting networks within HELCOM in conjunction with national experts nominated specifically for the RED LIST II work.

#### Red List of Species

Task teams:

- Red list task team for Macrophytes (TT MACRO)
- Red list task team for Benthic Invertebrates (TT BI)
- Red list task team for Fish and Lamprey (TT FISH)
- Red list task team for Seabirds (TT BIRDS)
- Red list task team for Marine Mammals (TT MM)

#### IUCN material

Since the end of the previous HELCOM RED LIST project in 2013, IUCN has progressed significantly in the process of considering the regional assessment approach. This includes the ArcGIS IUCN Red List Species Mapping Toolbox and the EOO calculator. Work planned under the review would entail pre-assembling guidelines, prepared prior to the Red List assessment work, utilizing the updated and refined guidelines from IUCN (see Annex 2).

#### Use of the Swedish assessment tool EDIT

The Swedish Red List assessment tool EDIT, that follows the IUCN guidance, can be used in the HELCOM Red List species assessment, after modifications regarding taxonomic compatibility, and language are applied. These modifications will be carried out by Sweden before the start of the assessment work (during Q3 of 2022). The intention is that available assessment results exported from EDIT will be further evaluated and validated by the experts involved. The current tool EDIT is similar to the one used to assess some species groups within the previous HELCOM Red List assessment (AVA), allowing for a consistent comparison of results.

#### HELCOM tools and infrastructure

The updated [HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea macrospecies](#) (published in 2020) will facilitate the Red List assessment (e.g. via data availability and storage, possibility to query the data, and the potential to use digital tools for part of the assessment process etc.) and the observation data are readily available also via the [HELCOM Biodiversity Database](#) (BioBase). BioBase provides infrastructure lacking during the previous RED LIST project and offers the possibility to automate a significant part of the assessment work, which in turn positively affects the resource requirements.

In order to optimize the use of EDIT (see section above) calculations for Area of Occupancy (AOO) and Extent of Occurrence (EOO), two of the most influential IUCN criteria, are needed for each species. As this has in the past proven to be a time-consuming process the possibility to develop a regional tool which produces the calculations, as well as the underlying maps, has been explored and seems fully feasible using the infrastructure developed under the HELCOM Biodiversity Database (BioBase). Such a tool would both significantly reduce the workload and provide highly valuable input to the expert review and ultimately the Species Information Sheets.

#### *Data reporting*

BioBase also provides vital infrastructure for reporting, storing and querying data to support the assessments, as well as providing agreed data formats, preliminary quality checks of reported data and a way to ensure direct links with the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS). Several of the HELCOM Contracting Parties have recently updated their national red lists. According to a questionnaire circulated for the Red List Workshop 1-2017, most species groups were to be completely or partially assessed by several countries by 2020, and it was expected that new data would become available through the national processes for the majority of the species groups by the end of 2020. This presents an opportunity to align the national and regional work and benefit from the national work as basis for the HELCOM review and should facilitate data reporting.

The Contracting Parties are requested to provide data for populating the database, as a basis for the assessment, as well as the approval of the reported data (see under 7. *Timetable*).

The timing of the project would enable synergies with HOLAS III with regards to data reporting, with many of the species data strands already included in the HOLAS III data call and thus minimizing the resource requirements for data reporting under the RED LIST II project. In addition to species data, information on e.g. pressures and human activities etc. highly useful for supporting information such as Species Information Sheets (SIS) will be readily available from the HOLAS III process.

#### *Red List of Habitats and Biotopes*

Task teams:

- Red list task team for Benthic Habitats and Biotopes (TT BHB)
- Red list task team for Pelagic Habitats and Biotopes (TT PHB)

#### *Improving HUB classification*

In order to review and possibly fill gaps in the HUB classification, the data will need to be processed using the BalMar tool, which is foreseen to be a task subcontracted to consultants who supported the HELCOM RED LIST project 2013 and are thus familiar both with the process and the tool.

In order to increase the precision of the habitat/biotope classification, creating conversion factors to convert biovolume values of benthic fauna to biomass values for use in the BalMar tool is proposed. This would allow for example to differentiate the biotopes dominated by barnacles (*Balanus improvisus*) and those dominated by blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) thus allowing for these biotopes to be classified on a more precise level. This adjustment would allow for benthic habitats characterised by epibenthic fauna be classified at the same level as benthic habitats characterised by vegetation (which are based on biovolume values that are more easily available than biomass values).

#### *IUCN material*

Since the end of the previous HELCOM RED LIST project in 2013, IUCN has progressed significantly in the process of considering the regional assessment approach as well as the assessment guideline for ecosystems. Work planned under the review would entail pre-assembling guidelines, prepared prior to the Red list assessment work, utilizing the updated and refined guidelines from IUCN (see Annex 2).

#### *Other supporting material*

Several of the HELCOM Contracting Parties have in recent years prepared updated national red list assessments and, in this process, included the assessment of habitats and biotopes. Where the IUCN Guidelines for assessment of ecosystems and the HUB categorizations have been utilized to do this work (e.g. Finland) much of the national work is directly or indirectly transferable to the regional level, e.g. the establishment of descriptions of collapse for individual habitats and biotopes. This is a valuable resource and can be used as a basis for regional level work.

### HELCOM tools and infrastructure

The HELCOM Map and Data Services (MADS) can be used to display and grid the collated maps stemming from the national habitats data.

### Data reporting

MADS also provides vital infrastructure for reporting and storing data to support the assessments, as well as providing agreed data formats. Several of the HELCOM Contracting Parties have recently prepared national habitats and biotopes mapping data using the HUB classification, supporting access to comparable spatial information from several parts of the Baltic. This presents an opportunity to align the national and regional work and benefit from the national work as basis for the HELCOM review and should facilitate data reporting.

The Contracting Parties are requested to provide data for populating MADS, as a basis for the assessment, as well as the approval of the reported data (see under 7. *Timetable*).

The timing of the project would enable synergies with HOLAS III with regards to data reporting, in the case of habitats and biotopes potentially providing improved information for the HOLAS III assessments and analyses, e.g. for spatial distribution of ecosystem component, provisioning of ecosystem services and ecosystem accounting. In addition to species data, information on e.g. pressures and human activities etc. highly useful for supporting information such as Habitat Information Sheets (HIS) will be readily available from the HOLAS III process.

## 6. Expected results

### Red List of Species

The project is expected to produce updated assessments of Red listed species (macrophytes, benthic invertebrates, fish and lamprey, birds, and marine mammals) in the HELCOM area, based on the previous HELCOM Red List assessments finalized in 2013 and the updated Checklist of Baltic Sea macro species, published in 2020, as well as reviewed and, where needed, updated Species Information Sheets.

### Red List of Habitats and Biotopes

The project is expected to produce updated assessments of Red listed habitats/biotopes in the HELCOM area, based on the previous HELCOM Red List assessments finalized in 2013, as well as a review and, where identified based on new data, improvement of the underlying HUB classification to support the assessment.

## 7. Consistency with HELCOM priorities

yes  no

Please see Annex 1 for reference.

## 8. Preliminary Timetable (including number of Project Team meetings)

The following table presents the general overview of the suggested work process, orange-colored cells: Work stages involving contributions by CPs, light blue colored cells: species, mid-blue colored cells: habitats/biotopes, dark blue colored cells: both species and habitats/biotopes related work.

Task	2022		2023				2024			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data call for any species data not already included in HOLAS III data reporting										
Populate database with any new species data										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed on assessment of species		S&C								
Online review of species data										
Edit the Swedish assessment tool EDIT to ensure it operates in English and harmonize the taxonomy with the HELCOM biodiversity database, carried out by Sweden										
Develop a regional tool for AOO and EOO calculations										
Prepare and provide species datasets for initial assessment										
Run initial species assessments using EDIT										

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Review initial species assessment results										
Back-to-back species workshops (see details below)										
Any needed corrections to species assessments										
Review of any changed species assessments										
Preparation on updated SIS for review										
Online review of SIS										
Data call for data on distribution of habitats and biotopes										
Merge information into regional habitat and biotope distribution maps										
Identify any spatial gaps in coverage for habitats and biotopes distribution information										
Address gaps in coverage of habitat and biotope distributional information, where possible										
Updating the BalMar tool to fill gaps in HUB										
Improving HUB by including additional biotopes based on new data (filling gaps)										
Review of the possible additional biotopes in HUB										
Populate MADS with new habitat and biotope data and maps										
Workshop on pelagic habitat assessment approach										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed for habitats and biotopes										
Online review of habitat and biotope data and maps										
Review the existing proposals for habitat/biotope collapse descriptions under IUCN criteria C										
Workshop to prepare and agree on use of IUCN criteria C, including setting collapse descriptions where these are not available.										
Run initial assessments										
Review initial assessment results										
Workshop to review result of habitats and biotopes assessment										
Any needed corrections to habitats and biotopes assessments										
Review of any changed habitats and biotopes assessments										
Preparation on updated HIS for review										
Online review of HIS										
Wrap up (any remaining updates, report, updating website and making content accessible)										
Approval of report										
Publication and launch of all material										

## Red List of Species

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data call for any species data not already included in HOLAS III data reporting										
Populate database with any new species data										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed on assessment of species										
Online review of species data										
Edit the Swedish assessment tool EDIT to ensure it operates in English and harmonize the taxonomy with the HELCOM biodiversity database, carried out by Sweden										

Develop a regional tool for AOO and EOO calculations											
Prepare and provide species datasets for initial assessment											
Run initial species assessments using EDIT											
Review initial species assessment results											
Back-to-back species workshops (see details below)											
Any needed corrections to species assessments											
Review of any changed species assessments											
Preparation on updated SIS for review											
Online review of SIS											
Wrap up (any remaining updates, report, updating website and making content accessible)											
Approval of report											S&C
Publication and launch											

It is perceived that five back-to-back workshops will be needed to address possible comments and come to an agreement on the assessment results:

1. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for macrophytes.
2. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for benthic invertebrates.
3. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for fish and lamprey (could be carried out in coordination with HELCOM FISH-PRO and HELCOM Fish Group)
4. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for seabirds (could be carried out in coordination with HELCOM/OSPAR/ICES joint working group on birds)
5. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for marine mammals (could be carried out in coordination with HELCOM EG MAMA)

#### Red List of Habitats and Biotopes

Task	2022		2023				2024			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data call for data on distribution of habitats and biotopes										
Merge information into regional habitat and biotope distribution maps										
Identify any spatial gaps in coverage for habitats and biotopes distribution information										
Address gaps in coverage of habitat and biotope distributional information, where possible										
Updating the BalMar tool to fill gaps in HUB										
Improving HUB by including additional biotopes based on new data (filling gaps)										
Review of the possible additional biotopes in HUB										
Populate MADS with new habitat and biotope data and maps										
Workshop on pelagic habitat assessment approach										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed for habitats and biotopes		S&C								
Online review of habitat and biotope data and maps										
Review the existing proposals for habitat/biotope collapse descriptions under IUCN criteria C										
Workshop to prepare and agree on use of IUCN criteria C, including setting collapse descriptions where these are not available										
Run initial assessments										
Review initial assessment results										
Workshop to review result of habitats and biotopes assessment										

Any needed corrections to habitats and biotopes assessments											
Review of any changed habitats and biotopes assessments											
Preparation on updated HIS for review											
	2022		2023				2024				
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Online review of HIS											
Wrap up (any remaining updates, report, updating website and making content accessible)											
Approval of report										S&C	
Publication and launch											

6. Expert workshop on considering approach for inclusion of pelagic habitats in the assessment (possibly utilizing the discussions and synergies on pelagic assessment under HOLAS III)
7. Expert workshop on agreeing on descriptions for habitat/biotope collapse under Criteria C (possibly in cooperation with EN BENTHIC)
8. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for habitats/biotopes (possibly in cooperation with EN BENTHIC)

## 9. Budget (taking into account financial year from 1 July to 30 June)

### 9.1 Total Costs

The planned two and a half years would require an estimated 202.000 euros of funding.

This is intended to be divided as follows:

- 30 person-months for a full-time Project Coordinator (located at the Secretariat) to cover the review of Red List of species and habitats/biotopes.
- 18 person-months for project researcher to assist the Project Coordinator with running the initial assessments and taking part in the workshops for reviewing the initial results.

Year	Total/activity
<b>Project Coordinator (at Secretariat)</b>	120.681
<b>Project Researcher (at Secretariat)</b>	63.632
<b>Analysis tool, data processing (at Secretariat)</b>	7.802
<b>Subcontracting (updating and running the BalMar tool to fill gaps in HUB)</b>	10.000
<b>Workshops</b>	No additional cost
<b>Product finalization (report editing etc.)</b>	No additional cost
<b>Total</b>	202.115

## 10. Additional requests (manpower, equipment, facilities, etc.)

### 10.1 From the Contracting Parties

The Contracting Parties are requested to provide data for populating the database and MADS, as a basis for the assessment, inform on national approaches to habitat and biotope assessment, as well as expert participation in the suggested task teams and workshops to review and approve data and review assessment results (see under 7. *Timetable*). As highlighted by STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 it is important that a clear lead is assigned for each task team, and in accordance with this Contracting Parties are invited to consider nominating a lead for one or several of the Task Teams.

### 10.2 From the Secretariat

The Secretariat will ensure coordination of the project with other planned and ongoing HELCOM processes, dissemination, and information flow as well as facilities and equipment needed for the work.

### 11. Procedure of nomination of the Project team members

Project coordinator and researcher will be employed by the Secretariat. The Contracting Parties are invited to nominate national experts for the seven task teams:

- Red list task team for Macrophytes (TT MACRO)
- Red list task team for Benthic Invertebrates (TT BI)
- Red list task team for Fish and Lamprey (TT FISH)
- Red list task team for Seabirds (TT BIRDS)
- Red list task team for Marine Mammals (TT MM)
- Red list task team for Benthic Habitats and Biotopes (TT BHB)
- Red list task team for Pelagic Habitats and Biotopes (TT PHB)

Nomination can preferably align with national representation in the respective HELCOM Expert Groups, however, official nomination is recommended, to ensure clear mandate and expectation of workload.

### 12. Signature of the Project Manager(s)

### 13. Opinion of the Chairs of the relevant body

### 14. Opinion of the Executive Secretary

### 15. Decision of the Heads of Delegation

Outcome of HOD 61-2021

to establish  not to establish

## Annex 10 Project description for HELCOM Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring and assessment in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM PEG QA)

### 1. Title of the project:

Quality assurance of phytoplankton monitoring & assessment in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM PEG QA)

### 2. Project Manager(s):

Ms. Iveta Jurgensone, Latvia, 2020-2024

### 3. Proposing party:

Contracting parties: Latvia

### 4. The body supervising the project:

HELCOM STATE & CONSERVATION

### 5. Target and activities:

The main target of the project is to ensure and maintain high quality standard of the international Baltic Sea regional phytoplankton monitoring within the HELCOM COMBINE Program. Furthermore, the project will act as a platform to bring the work on phytoplankton indicators forward. This should be achieved by:

- Maintaining annual training courses (workshop)
- Maintaining the phytoplankton biovolume list
- Participation in intercalibrations
- Maintaining the HELCOM guidelines for monitoring of phytoplankton species composition, abundance and biomass
- The project will serve as a forum for discussion of phytoplankton indicators being developed in HELCOM and the results of the indicator evaluation of future HELCOM holistic assessments.

The main activities within the project will be carried out in two meetings per year. In spring a 2-day on-line meeting will be held with the main purpose of updating the HELCOM PEG Biovolume file. In autumn a 3-4 day physical meeting will be held, facilitating a training course with one or several invited teachers. The venue of the workshops will be circulated between the Contracting Parties and their marine laboratories. Suggested host countries are: Poland in 2022, Sweden (Umeå University) in 2023 and in 2024 Denmark. Intersessional activities will be organized if needed. The following types of activities are planned:

#### Activity:

#### Training courses

#### Aim:

To maintain continuity and high quality in phytoplankton identification and quantification, in particular because a new generation of phytoplankton researchers and analysts are currently joining the PEG;

To follow recent changes in the taxonomy of Baltic Sea relevant phytoplankton in order to keep the PEG Phytoplankton species/biovolume list up to date.

The training courses are planned to encompass:

- a) Identification of phytoplankton species;

- b) Maintaining and enhancing the competence of analysts to identify alien species;
- c) Enhancing the competence of analysts to distinguish resting stages from vegetative stages in the plankton

Presenting representative and validated images of Baltic Sea phytoplankton species, publicly available in the HELCOM PEG image gallery at [www.Nordicmicroalgae.org](http://www.Nordicmicroalgae.org).

#### **Intercalibrations**

To keep the high standard of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea and to ensure the comparability of results. The group is active in selecting suitable intercalibrations which could be participated by the group members. At the annual meetings, we allocate time to discuss and find solutions for the possible quality problems revealed within intercalibrations. In addition, organizers of the intercalibrations are invited to the meeting for presentation of the results where the results will be evaluated and discussed and can lead to future suggestions for intercalibrations.

#### **Further unifying the counting method**

To continuously update the HELCOM monitoring manual for phytoplankton species composition, abundance and biomass.

#### **Updating of the biovolume file**

To add new taxa and size classes when necessary; to update the biovolume file according to recent taxonomical changes in co-operation with ICES Data Centre.

#### **Harmonization of biovolume calculations between CEN standard EN16695:2015 and the PEG biovolume list**

To start the harmonization of biovolume calculations between the PEG biovolume file and the CEN standard EN-16695:2015 by starting with taxa that show major differences.

#### **Production of environmental fact sheets**

To update and produce environmental fact sheets to track changes in Baltic Sea phytoplankton community structure.

#### **Platform for phytoplankton indicators**

Within PEG a sub-group will be established which is responsible for preparing a 0,5 day session at the yearly meetings in order to discuss progress within indicator development and in a later stage to discuss possible assessment of pelagic habitats within HOLAS III. Further development of the Dia/Dino Indicator is planned, to better define the target of this indicator and broaden the interpretation regarding status accordingly. The adjustment of the CyaBI indicator required before application in HOLAS III will continue to be made in consultation with the PEG group. Furthermore, the group will act as a forum for possible intersessional work on indicator development. It is planned to share national experiences from the latest assessment in 2022 and discuss the outcome of the HELCOM indicator workshops in the next PEG meetings in 2022 and 2023. So far, the indicator work will be conducted by a lead-country approach but in order to develop a holistic assessment of pelagic habitats, including zooplankton, an externally funded EU-project has started this year. This is the HELCOM BLUES project, that includes several

members of the PEG group. The project will have a pelagic habitat holistic approach. The progress of this project will be presented at the on-line meeting in autumn 2021 to enable other members to comment and discuss. Any future initiatives of funding possibilities is crucial as work with indicators are time consuming. PEG acknowledge the excellent work of the HELCOM secretariat to enable the BLUES funding and hope that the Secretariat will help out in future calls.

Relevant HELCOM indicators:

Diatom/Dinoflagellate index

Seasonal succession of dominating phytoplankton groups

Cyanobacterial bloom index (PEG to be consulted)

The project period is hereby proposed to be prolonged from the originally envisioned three years to five years, due to the exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Iveta Jurgensone, Latvia, will be the chair and convener during 2020-2024.

## 6. Expected results.

The outcome of the project will be:

- a) Annual reports from the three workshops to HELCOM STATE & CONSERVATION;
- b) Annually revised species/biovolume list of Baltic Sea phytoplankton species;
- c) Updated HELCOM Monitoring manual for Phytoplankton - Species composition, abundance and biomass
- d) We will discuss the existing and possible new phytoplankton indicators, including proposals for integration and aggregation. The outcome of this will be presented as a part in the annual workshop report.
- e) After participating intercalibrations, the outcome of results and discussions will be presented as a part in the annual workshop report.
- f) Updated HELCOM environmental fact sheet (Cyanobacteria biomass) or send the Nostocales biomass data through the HELCOM Secretariat to be used for indicator fact sheet, depending on decision on how to use information in the BSEFS;
- g) Continuation of contribution of quality-checked images to the HELCOM PEG image gallery at [www.Nordicmicroalgae.org](http://www.Nordicmicroalgae.org);
- h) Final report (2020-2024).

## 7. Consistency with HELCOM priorities

yes  no

## 8. Timetable

The project will be carried out in 2020-2024 as a continuation to the ongoing HELCOM PEG project for 2017-2019. More specific timetable:

Regular tasks will be discussed during all workshops, for example:

- discussion on new species and size classes that have occurred in the previous year's samples including non-indigenous species. New species have to be presented with picture showing characteristic features for the species and location of sampling
- discussion of new environmental fact sheets and updating of the existing one (Cyanobacteria biomass)
- harmonization of species identification by common microscopy of samples from the Baltic Sea
- harmonization of analyzing methods by discussing the methodology and intercalibration results to assess homogeneity in the analyses
- information on recent changes in taxonomy of planktonic microalgae
- new images to add to the phytoplankton image gallery

- information on new relevant literature, projects about e.g. the development of phytoplankton indicators, meetings and conferences
- review of phytoplankton indicators being developed by Lead Countries, including integration and aggregation and possible thresholds.

Specific tasks for the workshops are:

*Workshop 2022, to be held in Poland*

- Phytoplankton identification workshop: Summaries on the Advanced Phytoplankton Course APC12 by Iveta Jurgensone and Heidi Hällfors
- Practical work with participants' samples.
- Discussion of the next intercalibration which will be recommended to be participated by the group members. Wishes of the group will be sent to the representatives of the ProfTest SYKE, which is organizing interlaboratory proficiency tests for phytoplankton.
- Discussion about which indicators contracting parties used in their latest MSFD assessment (to exchange experiences from the procedure used in different countries and how the different indicators works in different sea areas), which indicators should be prioritized according to the outcome of HELCOM indicator workshops and later progress in the BLUES project.

*Workshop 2023, to be held in Sweden*

- A training course on Baltic Sea phytoplankton identification, Heidi Hällfors, Finland.
- A lecture about choanoflagellates, teacher will be decided
- Planning the next project (2025-2027).
- Discussion of the HOLAS III assessment of pelagic habitats

*Workshop 2024, to be held in Denmark*

- A training course diatoms, Nina Lundholm, Denmark or on diatom resting spores and dinoflagellate cysts, Anna Godhe, Sweden.
- Presentation of the results from the ProfTest SYKE 2023 intercalibration and discussion of the outcome.
- Discussion of assessment of pelagic habitat to be included in HOLAS IV.

Specific tasks to support the development and evaluation of phytoplankton indicators

As this project period is in the middle of the 6 years cycle of the HOLAS IV assessment period, focus will be on discussions on revised indicators or new proposed indicators that have been developed after the current assessment period.

## 9. Budget

### 9.1. Total costs

The total costs for HELCOM from 2020 to 2024 are estimated to be **14980** EUR.

### 9.2. Costs divided per financial year

#### **Estimated costs for HELCOM**

##### 2022:

Compensation for one teacher (120 EUR/h, 8 hours)	960 EUR
Travel and accommodation for the teacher	1000 EUR
Administrative costs	1100 EUR
Travel and accommodation for project manager to present the PEG	600 EUR

work in the HELCOM State and Conservation meeting	
<b>SUM</b>	<b>3660 EUR</b>

2023:

Compensation for one teacher (120 EUR/h, 8 hours)	960 EUR
Travel and accommodation for the teacher	1000 EUR
Administrative costs	1100 EUR
Participation in the intercalibration	3000 EUR
Travel and accommodation for project manager to present the PEG work in the HELCOM State and Conservation meeting	600 EUR
<b>SUM</b>	<b>6660 EUR</b>

2024:

Compensation for one/two teachers (120 EUR/h, 8 hours)	960 EUR
Travel and accommodation for the teacher	1000 EUR
Presentation and evaluation of the Profest SYKE 2023 phytoplankton intercalibration at PEG annual workshop	1000 EUR
Administrative costs	1100 EUR
Travel and accommodation for project manager to present the PEG work in the HELCOM State and Conservation meeting	600 EUR
<b>SUM</b>	<b>4660 EUR</b>

### 9.3. Sources of financing divided per financial year

In general both HELCOM and the host countries finance the workshops and activities therein:

2022: HELCOM and Poland

2023: HELCOM and Sweden

2024: HELCOM and Denmark

The share of the host country is estimated to be ca. 1500 EUR annually. The estimated costs for HELCOM do not cover the expenses of the national experts expected to participate in the project.

## 10. Additional requests

### 10.1. From the contracting parties

The Contracting Parties are required to cover the travel expenses for the participation of the national experts in the workshops.

## 11. Procedure of nomination of the Project team members

The present phytoplankton expert group consists of the following experts:

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Hans Jakobsen	Denmark
Helene Munk Sørensen	Denmark
Andres Jaanus	Estonia
Marko Järvinen	Finland
Heidi Hällfors	Finland
Sirpa Lehtinen	Finland
Jeanette Göbel	Germany
Anke Kremp	Germany
Susanne Busch	Germany
Jessica Saule	Germany
Iveta Jurgensone	Latvia
Irina Olenina	Lithuania
Janina Kownacka	Poland
Justyna Kobos	Poland
Wojciech Kraśniewski	Poland
Evgenia Lange	Russia
Katerina Voyakina	Russia
Andrey Sharov	Russia
Marléne Johansson	Sweden
Siv Huseby	Sweden
Helena Högländer	Sweden
Marie Johansen	Sweden
Ann-Turi Skjevik	Sweden
Maria Karlberg	Sweden
Lars Edler	Sweden

12. Signatures of the project managers.

**Ms. Iveta Jurgensone**

Chair of HELCOM Phytoplankton Expert Group

13. Opinion of the chairman of the relevant body.

14. Opinion of the Executive Secretary

15. Decision of the heads of Delegation

Outcome of HOD 61-2021

to establish     not to establish

## Annex 11 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Bird Migration

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

### Background

These [ToR] provide a thematic overview of the work carried out by the [joint ICES] HELCOM expert group on bird migration.

As a result of increasing anthropogenic pressures on marine ecosystems, waterbirds have become the world's most threatened bird group. Average European waterbird population trends are either stable or declining. Approximately 33% are slightly declining and another 22% are regarded as threatened (BirdLife International, 2015). In the Norwegian Arctic, the Greater North Sea and the Celtic Seas, there has been an overall drop of 20% in waterbird populations over the last 25 years for more than one quarter of the species assessed (OSPAR, 2017). Similar information for the Baltic Sea is not available.

Currently, all bird related matters within HELCOM are considered under the HELCOM-OSPAR-ICES Joint Working Group on seabirds (JWGBIRD), which provides a platform for experts from the Baltic Sea and Northeast Atlantic regions to work on waterbird issues. While many aspects of bird migration (such as securing staging and wintering areas) are dealt within JWGBIRD, specific expertise on topics relating to the active flight stage of migratory birds has been lacking. The overarching aim of the expert group is to harness expertise on bird migration to support improved conservation of migratory birds in marine areas.

Use of the marine environment, including generation of renewable energy, is likely to further increase in the near future. This will affect birds migrating over sea areas, with an increased risk of direct collision with wind turbines, as recognized in the HELCOM [Recommendation 34E/1](#). Under the Habitats and Birds Directives Contracting Parties who are EU Member States need to designate specific areas as marine Natura 2000 sites to implement the aforementioned Directives. In order to secure an improved status of migratory bird species, the requirements inherent from migratory behaviour need to be included in management and conservation efforts through both securing barrier-free airspace for the migratory flight and securing stopover (and wintering) habitats.

However, the migratory behaviour of birds migrating over sea areas is still poorly understood, presenting a significant barrier to strategic planning and conservation efforts, especially at a trans-boundary scale. These knowledge gaps partially stem from the spatial and temporal limitations in the tracking information available to elucidate on species behaviour. While data on migration are available from tracking studies, migration counts, and radar observations access to the data and information, as well as the data itself, are often insufficient to draw conclusions. Where sufficient data are not available, the CP's should strive to implement additional monitoring ~~Where sufficient data are not available, additional monitoring should be implemented.~~

Sensitivity mapping is a key tool in understanding the sensitivity of marine areas to human pressures based on the presence of species that are expected to be affected by these pressures. This information can help decision-makers to arrange effective planning and management, e.g., by limiting specific activities to ensure that negative impacts are avoided or minimised. In order to create sensitivity maps, it is necessary to enhance the collection and processing of data on the spatial-temporal distribution and abundance of species.

Information on sensitivity, migratory behaviour, and spatiotemporal data on migration, as well as information and guidance on how it should be interpreted and best used, are key components of future planning and management efforts in Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), further supporting sustainable use of marine areas through spatial planning.

## Purpose

The overall purpose of the group is to facilitate regional cooperation in relation to bird migration with respect to safeguarding bird migration from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea, in close cooperation with other existing relevant frameworks and programmes working on bird migration.

It is to function as a coordinating framework and a platform to harness the expertise of leading scientists on bird migration, and to make this expertise available to policy makers and planners. In addition, the group will work on improving functioning dataflows and availability of data on bird migration. Through this, the sub-group helps ensure that up to date information on bird migration is accounted for in regional processes through JWGBIRD and subsequently in the advice and decision-making of the three organisations.

## Scope

The expert group's work will focus on bird migration over sea areas. This information will support collecting the data necessary to inform and guide management measures. The group's work focuses on risks to migratory birds from renewable energy generation (wind, wave, and tidal power), including infrastructure, and may be extended to other human activities deemed relevant for active migration over sea areas.

The expert group will handle the development and delivery of the scientific products of the dedicated work on bird migration, e.g., related to data collection and collation, developing methodology and guidance for monitoring, guidance on the use of produced data to inform spatial planning, as well as other agreed tasks assigned to the group. The work includes producing maps on species migration areas and sensitivity to human pressures, transferring quality assured science to end users, and providing clear guidance on the level of confidence in the presented information. The work can also support the identification of knowledge gaps and possible future research priorities. Due to limited data, it can be necessary to classify the selected migratory bird species in groups.

The work is transregional by nature and aims to cover the ecologically relevant geographical scope of bird migration in the Baltic Sea region [and across the NE Atlantic, and the Arctic].

The principal benefits of the sub-group are to have:

- a) Enhanced use of existing knowledge and improved dataflows for various data types, e.g., radar, telemetry and tracking data, and migration count data, with a focus on encouraging data sharing
- b) Improved access to information on migratory behaviour of birds migrating over sea areas
- c) Improved monitoring practices for birds migrating over sea areas
- d) Improved map products and appropriate use of data and map products in spatial planning
- e) Improved transfer of research results and products between planners and to the policy level
- f) Improved advice on necessary actions and measures and on how regional policies could be adapted to better account for bird migration in spatial planning

## Objectives

The objectives of expert group are to:

- a) Map the overall knowledge level of bird migration in the Baltic Sea, [NE Atlantic, and the Arctic]. region[s] based on existing data, expert knowledge, and ongoing research and post-consent monitoring, including gaps and recommendations for the relevant species (including whether the species is relevant for planning and why, altitude information etc.)
- b) Improve joint data management on a trans-regional level
- c) Produce detailed recommendations on how to conduct monitoring of birds migrating over sea areas to support the existing monitoring guidelines, possibly producing best-practice guidelines and harmonizing monitoring practices for e.g., citizen science observations and visual migration counts

- d) Produce and regularly update more specific species and sensitivity maps of a given area to e.g. renewable energy installations, in a way that allows inclusion of multiple types of data sources
- e) Cooperate with other initiatives (e.g. CMS and AEWA) to find synergies and to avoid duplication of ongoing work
- f) Cooperate closer with the planners, e.g., through scoping workshops to share information, challenges and needs
- g) Compile/define a list of priority species/species groups
- h) Identify funding possibilities for dedicated projects to support further work on bird migration and look into possibility to form a consortium, potentially in collaboration with [ICES,] HELCOM, and [OSPAR], to prepare and submit an application

### Reporting

The Chair of the Expert Group will report to State and Conservation WG [as well as the relevant OSPAR and ICES WGs] once a year on the Group's activities. Products developed and delivered intersessionally shall be appended to the report. The products stemming from the groups work will be handled at HELCOM workspaces dedicated to this purpose.

The group may also, where possible and appropriate, submit some products for publication in scientific journals or to be presented at conferences.

### Membership

Membership of the Expert Group is obtained either by experts seeking nomination from their national delegation, or via direct nomination by the Contracting Parties. It is important that all members of the Expert Group have a firm connection to their national delegations. The Expert Group Chair can also invite non-members to attend individual meetings or to take part in intersessional work as deemed relevant. Invited experts should demonstrate particular skills that are relevant to the delivery of a specific request.

Temporary involvement of other expertise within the respective organizations' structures can be further explored based on the list of tasks as the work progresses. The HELCOM Secretariat, together with the Group's Chair will evaluate the coverage of required technical expertise and communicate with the respective organisation on any additional need for expertise in the group. The aim is to ensure sufficient expertise for all identified tasks.

### Work plan

Concrete tasks for the group will be presented in the work plan included in Annex 1. The work plan is valid for a three-year period but should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that the timeline and planned work remains relevant. This task list enables long-term planning and delivery of significant products that may require several components to be developed during consecutive years.

### Validity of [ToR]

The work of the group is open ended. The Terms of Reference are to be subjected to review and, as appropriate, revision by the expert group, every 3 years and endorsement by the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group.

### Organization of work

The mode of work for the expert group will include correspondence and online meetings facilitated by HELCOM with physical meetings taking place as needed. Expert opinion will be required at more frequent intervals than annual, and the annual meeting cycle and reporting format of the group may not necessarily be the most appropriate forum in which to deal with such requests (e.g. due to mismatched deadlines). Correspondence and intersessional work between relevant group members should be used to provide a timely delivery of required outputs. Contracting Parties of the various conventions will need to be made aware of the resources (i.e. time of experts) that will be required for all aspects of the Group's work.

Given the extensive expertise and workload required to carry out the work related to bird migration, specific actions carried out by the expert group can be resourced through designated project funding. The possibilities of acquiring funding for the group's tasks through forming a consortium may subsequently affect the timing of completing actions in specific years or months. Whenever a project-funded activity is planned, the group will communicate details on the planning to HELCOM well in advance of the activity to enable dissemination of the information to all possibly concerned parties.

The group is encouraged to connect with other relevant bird groups and networks. The Expert group is particularly encouraged to actively communicate with JWGBIRD, as well as other initiatives (e.g. CMS and AEWA) and to enhance collaboration to the extent possible.

## Annex 1: Preliminary Task list of the Expert Group on Bird Migration

This task list is valid for a 3-year period (beginning 2022) and is to be reviewed and revised by the group and approved by the HELCOM State & Conservation WG. The task list should be considered as a reference document to help guide the group's work, rather than a definitive list of tasks that must be carried out.

Theme	Task	Specifications	Timeline
Supporting information	Produce a list of relevant migratory birds for each region in cooperation with representatives from national planning authorities, responsible for spatial planning to ensure that the information is relevant for planning purposes. Make the information accessible e.g. through species information sheets or a database.	Develop structure and relevant content for supporting information, including but not limited to:	
		Name and relevant ecology of species	
		Timing and drivers of migration	
		Temporal aspects of migration, including seasonality, monthly and time of day	
		Information on flight altitude	
		Species distributions	
		Species movements in space and time	
		Drivers that control patterns in distribution and movement	
		Identify species that are clear broad-front migrants vs. those for which tracking would yield good results	
		Bird behavior when facing barriers or obstacles (e.g. windfarms)	
		Bird behavior under varying weather conditions etc.	
		Is a species relevant for planning and why	
Migration occurring at night and daytime			
Monitoring, data, and information flows	Data management infrastructure	Perform gap analyses for data, e.g. low amount and narrow spatial distribution of data for several species migrating over sea areas	
		Agree on the use of a trans-regional data format drawing on	

		existing data formats (e.g. MoveBank)	
		Establishing data flows	
		Establishing long term consistent data hosting	
		Ensure that data is accessible	
	To map the overall level of available knowledge for the relevant bird species (as defined by the sub-group) in order to produce an overview and a gap analysis		
	Produce detailed monitoring guidelines on how to conduct monitoring of migratory [birds/waterbirds]	Tracking, for the recording devices to collect increasing number of fixes and register additional information, e.g. flight altitude	
		Recommend species for monitoring to broaden spectrum to ensure the data is useful for also for planning purposes	
		Calculate and recommend the required number of taggings in order to get proper coverage for statistical analyses	
	Explore and provide guidance for citizen science relating to migratory [birds/waterbirds]	Ensure that effort is logged (hours etc) when conducting and including citizen science in the information, guidance to ensure quality-checking and quantifying the data is available	
	Plan and recommend how to best implement joint surveys (e.g. interlacement of existing national monitoring programmes) on migratory waterbird species' to further identify and gain knowledge on migratory [bird/waterbird] species	Monitoring using tracking data and for the tracking efforts to be spread out across the distributional range of the species (to account for that sub-populations might have different migration behavior)	
	Prepare guidelines for collection of post-construction investigations of actual effects from wind		

	and wave energy, based on before/after comparison studies		
	Develop a digital catalogue with GIS-maps concerning migration routes, moulting areas, staging areas, and other features that influence the distribution of waterbirds in space and time	Make the catalogue publicly available	
		Communication/ outreach about the developed GIS-maps	
Maps on waterbird migration and staging	To produce species specific migration maps using a gridded approach in order for the final maps to meet the requirements of planning	Develop common methodology for producing species specific migration maps	
		Prepare information in approximate numbers of individuals of waterbirds using the routes	
		Set definitions for how to evaluate confidence and uncertainty (whether data is based on expert judgment and/or data, and the size and quality of the dataset)	
		Provide uncertainty estimates as an integrated component of the maps	
		Develop and agree on how to, in addition to numbers of individuals of species using a given route, also consider rarity of the species	
		Consider if and how to best include buffers, sensitivity scores or weighting to the layers and tracks	
		Agree on an appropriate approach for including buffer zones around the area with the highest density of /individuals	
		Set definitions for how to weigh the tracks	
		Link relevant information collated under X with the maps, e.g. as part of the metadata information	

	Preparing large scale sensitivity mapping through aggregating species layers	Develop common methodology for producing aggregated sensitivity analysis maps for resting areas and migratory routes of birds migrating over sea areas	
		Approximate numbers of species and individuals of waterbirds using the route	
		Consider if and how to best include buffers, sensitivity scores or weighting to the layers	
		Agree on an approach for including buffer zones around the area with the highest density of species/individuals	
		Develop and agree on how to, in addition to numbers of individuals of species using a given route, also consider rarity of the species	
		Set definitions for how to evaluate confidence and uncertainty (whether data is based on expert judgment and/or data, and the size and quality of the dataset)	
		Provide uncertainty estimates as an integrated component of the maps	
	Develop and / or update of the mathematical factor (coefficient) that presently are used widely for calculated mortality due to collision and displacement at wind farms and it should be investigated whether bio-geographical adjustments are needed.		
A compiled description of the effects on selected migratory bird species from human activities at sea,	Addressing the subject of cumulative effects from human activities in space and time.		

	Comprising gaps of knowledge	Evaluation of potential impacts on the flyway population level as well as development of methods to address potential cumulative impacts from these effects.	
	Complement the information on migration with similar information on resting/staging waterbirds, to be presented as separate sensitivity maps (for reasons of transparency and detail).	Develop maps	
		Link routes to staging areas	
	Prepare a publication of migration in the Baltic Sea, including gaps and recommendations, for submission to a scientific journal.		
	Prepare recommendations for actions based on the results of the migration and sensitivity mapping.		
	To complement the list of species information with a non-exclusive list of non-waterbird priority species		

## Annex 12 Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Zooplankton

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

### Background

Zooplankton is a major link in aquatic ecosystems and integral to food web dynamics, ecosystem productivity, and nutrient and carbon cycling. Given its key position linking phytoplankton to higher trophic levels, an improved understanding of zooplankton as a part of pelagic environments, is a prerequisite for an ecosystem approach to management, a cornerstone to HELCOM, Baltic Sea Action Plan, Marine Strategy Framework Directive and EU Common Fisheries Policy.

The HELCOM Zooplankton Network started developing indicators in 2010 within the CORESET I project using zooplankton monitoring data from the Baltic Sea. It oversees development of the Zooplankton mean size and total stock (MSTS) indicator, which is currently being further developed under the HELCOM BLUES project. The Network has previously completed two projects: ZEN-QAI, the Quality Assurance and Integration of Zooplankton Monitoring in the Baltic Sea (2011-2014) and ZEN-ZIIM, the Zooplankton Indicator Integration to Monitoring in the Baltic Sea (2015-2017).

### Main aims and focus of the group

The HELCOM Zooplankton Expert Group (EG ZOO) works on developing zooplankton-based indicators to follow-up the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and supports the Joint Baltic Sea zooplankton monitoring and status assessments within HELCOM. The Group contributes to the core indicator reports and data products regarding use of zooplankton in environmental status assessment, including the State of the Baltic Sea Assessment (HOLAS). The Group further provides a forum for experts involved in the Baltic Sea zooplankton monitoring to share information on methodological aspects of collecting and analyzing samples, data storage, statistical treatment, quality assurance and taxonomical aspects of zooplankton research.

The Group focuses on the overall quality, evaluation and reporting of the national marine zooplankton monitoring data, on developing the use of long-term data for environmental assessment in the Baltic Sea as well as improving the efficiency of the monitoring data use and developing pelagic habitat assessments and their viability for use in HOLAS with respect to e.g., indicator aggregation.

In addition to the work on zooplankton indicators, the Group's work focuses on zooplankton as a part of pelagic habitats and food webs and providing guidance on these topics in HELCOM processes and projects.

### Tasks:

- Update core indicator reports and participate in assessments of pelagic habitats at intervals as decided in HELCOM, including regular review of the data and assessment products.
- Work towards the harmonization of the zooplankton monitoring guidelines.
- Intercalibrations to keep the high standard of zooplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea, to assure the comparability of results.
- Initiate and maintain regular training courses on taxonomy and other issues relevant for zooplankton work (e.g. sampling, biomass determination).
- Establish a common procedure to maintain a joint list of Baltic zooplankton species for all subregions.
- Oversee recommendations on data reporting formats for HELCOMs database (including those hosted by ICES) and other relevant related databases (e.g., WoRMS, AquaNIS etc).

- Revise recommendations for zooplankton biomass assessment as necessary.
- Further development of the pelagic habitat and food webs assessment methodologies in HELCOM as concerning zooplankton as well as zooplankton indicators, including regular scientific review of the agreed GES boundaries and integration of indicators.
- Cooperate with all Contact Points and interested HELCOM observers.
- Contribute to HELCOM assessments (such as HOLAS III).
- Provide annual progress reports to HELCOM State and Conservation WG.

### Reporting

The Chair(s) of the Group will report to State and Conservation WG once a year on the Group's activities. A template for the reporting will be provided by the Secretariat.

### Membership

The Group will consist of experts nominated by Contracting Parties, including those experts already involved in the EG ZOO project group and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures.

### Work plan:

A work plan for 2022-2024, aligned with the review period of the ToRs, will be prepared for and elaborated at the first meeting of the Group, after which the workplan will be reviewed and updated in the EG ZOO meetings prior to the end date of the workplan, to be presented for approval by State and Conservation WG.

### Validity of ToR

The work of the group is open ended. The Terms of Reference are subject to review and, as appropriate, revision by the expert Group every 2 years and approval by the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group.

### Organization of work

The expert Group will function under and receive guidance from the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group and will collaborate with and support the work of other HELCOM groups, particularly the Phytoplankton Expert Group (PEG) and the HELCOM Correspondence Group on Food webs (CG Foodwebs) and the OSPAR/HELCOM Joint Working Group on Non-Indigenous Species.

The Group can request input from the State and Conservation WG as appropriate.

The mode of work for the expert group will include correspondence and 1-2 online meetings per year, with the option of physical workshops to tackle specific issues, facilitated by the HELCOM Secretariat. Subgroups may be defined in order to work more thematically. Chair(s) will be elected by the members of EG ZOO. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this purpose. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Group.

## Annex 13 Terms of Reference for the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM Expert Group on Non-Indigenous Species 2021-2024

Adopted by HELCOM HOD 61-2021.

### Background

The OSPAR/HELCOM Joint Expert Group on Non-Indigenous Species (JEG NIS) is proposed to be established in 2021, through merging the existing OSPAR Expert Group on NIS and HELCOM experts.

This group is to be led by two co-convenors representing the two conventions: the OSPAR co-convenor is Peter Staehr (DK) and the HELCOM co-convenor is [N.N (CP)]. The co-chairs ensure that the joint group's activities meet the needs of each of the respective conventions. Experts will be encouraged to work on issues across conventions, as the work benefits from the wider expertise of all expert members and the exchange of knowledge and information across conventions. The group will be composed of experts from a wide range of backgrounds including government bodies and academic institutions. This will ensure a mix of applied and theoretical scientific expertise to support robust outputs relevant to NIS assessment and management.

Members will be encouraged to participate as much as possible in all the groups' activities. The joint group will be able to provide analysis and interpretation of the results of the OSPAR and HELCOM indicator assessments, providing thereby a large-spatial scale perspective.

These Terms of Reference (ToRs) and 3-year work programme cover a period of intense work in OSPAR and HELCOM with the delivery of the QSR - 2023 and HOLAS III 2022-2023, respectively. The JEG NIS will be responsible for delivering the common indicator assessment for newly arrived NIS and a data product for the distribution and abundance of NIS. Additionally, the group will deliver the thematic assessments for NIS, in particular relating to activities, pressures, status and impacts stemming from NIS.

### JEG NIS work themes

These ToR and work programme provide a thematic overview of the work that is to be carried out by JEG NIS, in cooperation with JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING<sup>2</sup>, Joint ICES/IOC/IMO Working Group on Ballast and Other Ship Vectors (WGBOSV) and the ICES Working Group on Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms (WG ITMO) as well as with relevant EU-level work on D2 of MSFD. Tasks under each theme will be specified on an annual basis.

The aim of describing a three-year ToRs and work programme is to facilitate the sign-off process that follows different annual schedules for OSPAR and HELCOM. This will also enable long-term planning and delivery of significant outputs that may require development of components over consecutive years, such as support of assessments for QSR-2023 and HOLAS III 2022-2023.

#### 1) Data and Database

JEG NIS will support the development of data formats and contribute, as needed, to the development of the required links among existing databases, in order to facilitate assessment of new introductions and impacts of NIS, as well as the success of possible management measures.

### OSPAR

Under OSPAR there is no agreed data-arrangements for NIS. A one-off data call has been issued for QSR 2023 purposes. Previous work of the OSPAR NIS EG have identified AquaNIS and JRC EASIN as possible solutions for long-term data storage and processing through a centralised approach. AquaNIS has been indicated, as

<sup>2</sup> JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING is a joint HELCOM-OSPAR expert group with a remit on preventing introduction of non-indigenous species through ship ballast water and hull fouling. The Terms of Reference of the group are regularly reviewed by the OSPAR EIHA Committee and HELCOM Maritime.

the preferred option by OSPAR BDC, noting that annual inputs to the database are secured and quality assured by ICES.

### HELCOM

HELCOM NIS monitoring programme currently utilizes AquaNIS database, complemented by data from other coordinated monitoring, as the data source for the HELCOM assessments. A web service is under development which will link the ICES Biological community database to the Decision Support Tool in the Joint Harmonised Procedure, which is already linked with AquaNIS, thus enabling harvesting of NIS observations reported to ICES as part of HELCOM COMBINE as well as NIS observations reported to AquaNIS.

Work under this theme includes:

- a) providing proposals for improving and harmonizing formats for data submissions under both conventions,
- b) identifying data issues associated with the databases and/or specific datasets,
- c) prepare data sets for assessments according to the quality requirements and make them available in accordance with data use and access policy,
- d) specifying technical aspects of how to make data stream processes operational, e.g. automating delivery of indicator assessments through scripts.

### 2) Monitoring

Work under this theme includes:

- e) providing a forum for discussion of monitoring programmes, focusing on developing joint or coordinated monitoring where possible,
- f) providing updates to OSPAR CEMP guidelines and appendices, HELCOM monitoring programmes and guidelines when required,
- g) providing expert opinion on the development and implementation of new monitoring strategies and guidelines for NIS,

### 3) Assessments

Work under this theme includes:

- h) ensuring information flow with regular communication to both convention secretariats relevant to JEG NIS and/or general NIS related issues,
- i) providing updates of indicators to be delivered regularly, frequency to be decided with the priority to deliver assessments for the QSR-2023 and HOLAS III, including thematic assessments,
- j) further developing the candidate indicators and/or developing new indicators, where a need has been identified by the Conventions or by MSFD (D2) at the EU level,
- k) developing integration methods and other aspects of indicator assessment, which require further development to be in line with EU MSFD assessment requirements according to COM DEC 848/2017,
- l) contributing NIS related information to assessments carried out by other relevant groups.

### 4) Ad hoc expert consultation

Responding as needed to queries from the parent organisations and their respective subsidiary bodies, such as JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING, relating to NIS issues by providing input or expert opinions.

### Ways of working

#### JEG NIS annual meetings

Annual meetings shall be organised and should be timed, where possible, to immediately precede a relevant convention meeting to ensure delivery of inputs to ongoing work in the respective parent organisation. The

format for the meetings will consist of one physical meeting followed by an online meeting. The responsibility for preparing and organising the meeting is with the co-convenors.

### Intersessional work

JEG NIS may be asked for expert opinion to be delivered based on intersessional work (i.e. at more frequent intervals than outlined in the workplan or which are not aligned with the timetable of the annual meeting). Therefore, the annual meeting cycle and reporting format of the group may not necessarily be the most appropriate forum in which to deal with such requests (e.g. due to mismatched deadlines).

Correspondence and intersessional work between relevant group members should be used to provide a timely delivery of required outputs.

### Delivery of results

Progress updates are to be provided regularly. For OSPAR, progress updates are to be provided by the lead to ICG-COBAM, and for HELCOM to State & Conservation Working Group. Deliverables developed and submitted intersessionally shall be appended to the progress report of this group.

The group, or a co-chair as a representative of the group, can deliver communications or expert opinions when required (including at short notice, if possible) and independent of the annual timing of the JEG NIS meeting. If possible, such responses should be summarised in the annual report.

### Group membership

Membership of JEG NIS is obtained by experts seeking nomination from their national delegations to either OSPAR or HELCOM.

The JEG NIS co-chairs, if substantiated, can also invite non-members to attend the annual meeting or to take part in intersessional work. Invited experts should demonstrate particular skills that are relevant to the delivery of a specific request. A list of members and their affiliations is available on the JEG NIS webpage and is updated annually.

The group is open to connect with other relevant groups and networks.

This group is led by two co-chairs representing both conventions. There is currently no limit on the length of tenure of each co-chair. This arrangement should be reviewed by members on an annual basis.

### Convention specifics

#### OSPAR

JEG NIS reports to OSPAR's Biological Diversity Committee (OSPAR BDC) via the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Co-ordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring (ICG-COBAM). There is also a need for JEG NIS to collaborate with national leads to deliver actions on OSPAR's Environmental Impacts of Human Activities (EIHA) Committee, via ICG-POSH.

#### HELCOM

JEG NIS will report to the HELCOM State and Conservation working group. JEG NIS will be required to collaborate, as needed, with national leads and co-leads of HELCOM indicators related to NIS and with national leads of HELCOM recommendations.

The group may also work on other HELCOM projects that support the commitments mentioned above.

## Annex 14 Statements by the European Commission

### **Statement by the European Commission Regarding Financing and the Implementation of EU Legislation**

The EU is an important financing body for potential projects being considered within the context of HELCOM. In order to avoid any interference with the independent decision-making procedures established under the various financing instruments, the EU does, as a matter of principle, not take any position as regards any project proposal intended for submission to EU financing bodies. This should not be interpreted in any way as prejudging the position of the EU when taking financing decisions.

The responsibility for implementing EU legislation is solely with the EU Member States. The role of the European Commission in accordance with EU Treaties is, inter alia, to assess compliance with EU legislation, for instance once a Member State has submitted its report under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Hence, any statement or position taken by the EU within the context of HELCOM should not be construed to give any assessment of whether the work done by HELCOM or by its contracting parties that are EU Member States is compliant with Union legislation.